

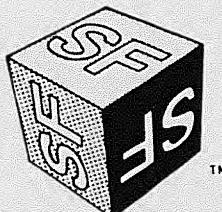
Issue No 25 Humor & SF Vol. 10 No 1 Winter 1986-87 ISSN 0275-3715

# AURORA

SPECULATIVE FEMINISM

SF



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# Introduction: On Feminism, Science Fiction, and Humor

(and Madison Fandom)

by Diane Martin

I remember when we started publicizing that *Janus* (and later *Aurora*) was a feminist science fiction fanzine. We felt we had to explain ourselves. And (re)define not only feminism, but also science fiction and fanzine. And explain the connection as well. Things are little easier now. It's 10 years later. The idea that SF is particularly well-suited to women writers because it offers opportunities to experiment, to extrapolate, to discover new ways of living, has become more of a given. Within the rather narrow confines of the genre. In the still narrower confines of the cognoscenti. (At least now there is a cognoscenti.)

With this issue of *Aurora*, we are again breaking new ground. Humorous feminist science fiction? My goodness. That's going to take a lot of explaining. Humorous science fiction--now, that's been done. My Nicholls's *Science Fiction Encyclopediæ* literally falls open (its spine is broken) to a long entry on "Humour" (Nicholls is British). It's a disappointing entry, though. Only male authors are mentioned, from Mark Twain to Kurt Vonnegut. The only female-connected reference is to the film *Barbarella*!

And then there's that perennial problem: women have no sense of humor. You hear that a lot. But what about Lynda Barry, Kate Clinton, Nicole Hollander? Right. They only make women laugh. Presumably that doesn't count. Let's face it. Women have a reputation for not having a sense of humor. A couple of books that go a long way toward dispelling this myth are *Titters* (ed. by Deanne Stillman and Anne Beatts; Macmillan, 1976) and *Pulling Our Own Strings: Feminist Humor and Satire* (ed. by Gloria Kaufman and Mary Kay Blakely; Indiana University Press, 1980)

**Question:** How many feminists does it take to change a light bulb?

**Answer:** That's not funny!

Still, where does science fiction hook up to all this? Consider our 1987 WisCon guest of honor, Connie Willis. Who hasn't hooted over "Blued Moon"? (which incidentally won both the Hugo & Nebula in 1984. Or, to cite a token male author, George Alec Effinger's Muffy Birnbaum, girl barbarian stories in *F&SF*? Phyllis Ann Karr's *Private Lucy and Thorn*, while not a romantic comedy by any means, has some uniquely funny role-reversal situations. Spider Robinson's Callahan's Place series, (to cite another token man) those atrocious shaggy dog stories, is also delightfully, overtly non-sexist. Feminist SF and



fantasy is not quite a mare's egg. But it's still rare. For those of you who are reading this now, preparing to write letters of comment, saying, "But what about \_\_\_\_\_? Or \_\_\_\_\_?" Go ahead! We'd love the input.

You may have noticed, in glancing at the table of contents, that this issue also focusses on Joanna Russ. How did that happen? Well, the lead article for *Aurora* 24, on under-appreciated women SF writers, was a review of Russ's *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, by Jeanne Gomoll. Somehow that review sparked a lot of interest in Russ's writing. Jeanne wrote another essay for this issue, "An Open Letter to Joanna Russ" (from which, incidentally, Russ has asked permission to quote in an up-coming book), picking up where the previous book/review left off. Madison fans found themselves discussing Russ's writing at open meetings, at conventions, at one another's homes. Phil Kaveny, Hank Luttrell, and I wrote reviews/articles about some of Russ's books for this issue. The review of Kramarae and Treichler's *A Feminist Dictionary* contains a lengthy quotation from one of Russ's essays. A feminist, humorous essay, no less.

I want to particularly call your attention to the letter column this time. We have several thoughtful letters--including one from Joanna Russ--from readers who share their own experiences concerning the suppression of writing and the re-writing of history.

Again glancing at the table of contents, you may also notice that our fiction seems to have been written by men. Our feminist science-fiction fiction. Yes. "Bad Fruit", by Alan Morris was accepted by us over four years ago. He's waited patiently for his story to see print. It's a dry, ridiculous parody of all those alpha-male scientist-saves-the-world stories. As for Paul Grussendorf's "Feline Eyes", well, I wrote to him saying (rather sheepishly) that my only reservation was that he was a man, but I was willing to take a chance, because I liked the story so much. He wrote back that he'd met with similar opposition before, and had been considering changing his name to "Paula". That won't be necessary. His story is remarkably perceptive--and provoking--and funny.

Last item on the agenda is the crisis that small press publishers find themselves in all the time. As readers, you-all have it so easy. All you do is sit back and wait for *Aurora* to drop into your mailbox every 18 months or so, regular

as clockwork. (Some clock!) But what do you do when you're doing this for love, not money, and it becomes not-fun any more, because you're doing it all alone?

Within the Madison fan group, interest in amateur publishing has dwindled, and the *Aurora* committee has dwindled right along with it. Up until quite recently, that is. Suddenly we've seen a resurgence of fan publishing. Spike Parsons has turned *Cube*, our bi-monthly newsletter, into a...to be truthful, words fail me as to just what it's turned into. Let me just say, It's Alive! (Take a chance; join SF3 and see what I mean.) Andy Hooper created--out of whole cloth--the Turbo-Charged Party-Animal APA. This is a Madison-based APA (amateur press association) for Madison fans to write to and for other Madison fans. I said it would never fly (The wings are too short.), but we've published four issues now (and had to buy Andy a heavy-duty stapler.) Suddenly people are clamoring to work on *Aurora*.

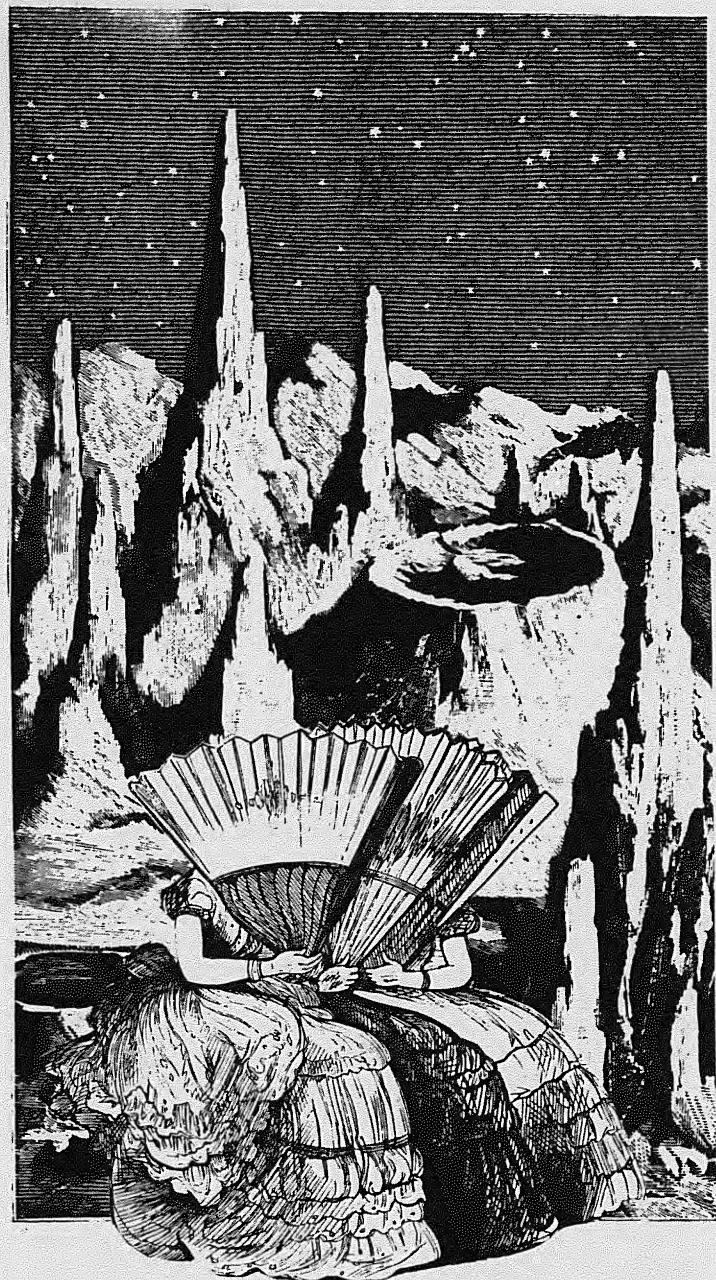
I'm not sure what to make of all this interest. My first impulse was to wonder if it's a trick. Then I decided to hold meetings, and see if anyone would come. They did. SF3 elections were held in October, and Jan Bogstad agreed to take over as chair of the Publications Committee. She has a vision of organizing and channeling people's publishing interests, so we can continue to publish *Cube*, revitalize *Aurora*, and revive *New Moon*. Me? Well, I thought I was burned out. Then I joined that APA. Started talking to people about publishing. And started writing this article.

At this point, the future of *Aurora* is still a bit shaky. Personally, I would like to see *Aurora* continue, but it's more than one person (at least this person) can do alone, in their Copious Spare Time. You may have noticed a lot of reviews this issue. We're trying this avenue as a way to (1) continue the magazine in a more relaxed format, (2) involve more people, (3) try to become more topical (and publish more often), and (4) cover feminist and small press books that are neglected in more traditional media.

*Aurora* 26, on Religion and the Paranormal, is in the planning stages. We need articles, poetry, fiction, reviews, and art. Reviews need not necessarily be on "theme" books. Any current woman-authored SF or fantasy or even feminist-related books are good candidates for review. We'd also especially like letters of comment, to make us feel that what we're doing is worthwhile.

**A Note to Those Who Trade With Us** (or want to): Jeanne Gomoll asked me to remind people that a trade with her magazine *Whimsey* is not the same as a trade with *Aurora*. Jeanne's fanzine collection is separate from the club collection. (Her address is listed in the Contributors' Gallery elsewhere in this issue.) Trades for *Aurora* should be addressed to *Aurora*, in care of the SF3 post office box.

**A Note to Our Subscribers:** Finally, we realize that our \*ahem\* irregular publishing schedule may inconvenience people. If any of you feel that you don't want to take a chance on *Aurora* continuing--or if you're just tired of waiting--we can offer you the option of converting the balance of your *Aurora* subscription towards an SF3 or a WisCon membership. Please write us if you are interested in either of these options.●

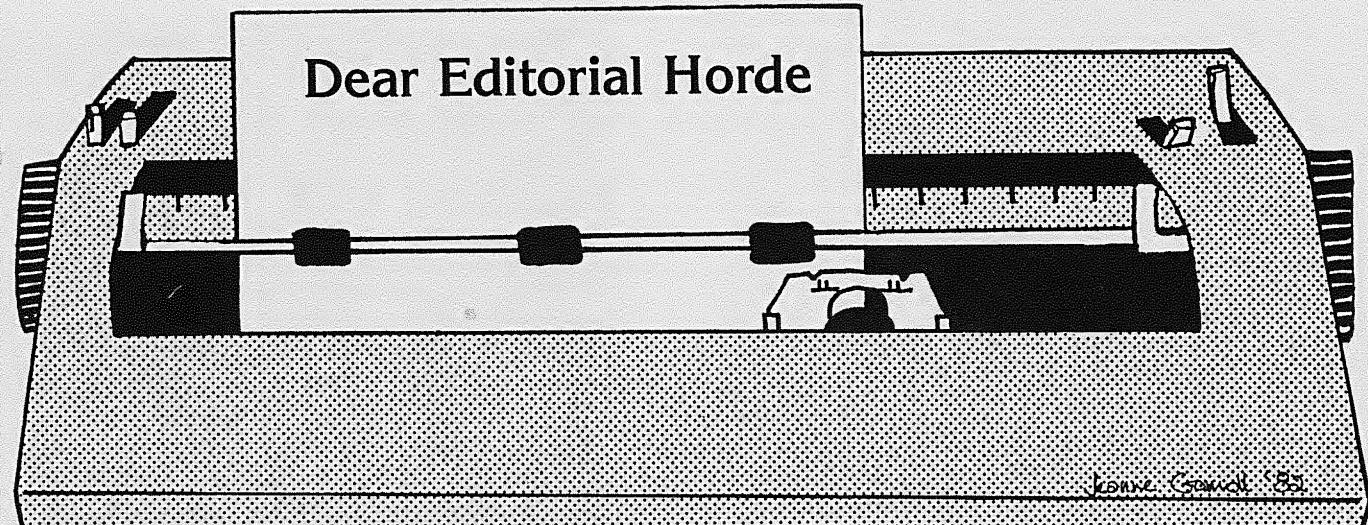


## Over Your Shoulder

by Pat Stewart

If we don't ban censorship soon  
There won't be anything left to read.  
You wouldn't be reading this  
If I hadn't deleted the F-words  
And took all the sun out.  
First they redline pornography  
So often you can't keep a breast.  
Then somebody speaks for God, and  
Bunches of lamebrain crackpots march  
Somewhere, and pretty soon they're  
Burning all the good stuff along  
With the bad. Put the gear of God  
Back in your head like this country  
Was wounded on. Good Old Christian  
Guilt and looking over your shoulder  
While we read the only book left.

# Dear Editorial Horde



**Jessica Amanda Salmonson**  
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Cheryl Cline has some perceptive comments on Victorian fantasists, though in some cases she makes more excuses for these writers than they need. While it's true Marie Corelli's novels are a bit thick (though still widely read by people interested in the occult, more than by people interested in supernatural fiction) her short stories are much more carefully done. Supernatural stories can be found in *Cameos* (1896), *The Song of Miriam* (1898), and *The Love of Long Ago* (1921). Her introduction to the novel *The Murder of Delicia* (1896) trounces the critics who always demeaned or qualified the merits of women's writings. I think Cheryl also underrates Olive Schreiner (pronounced SKRAY-ner) even while praising her. Besides *Dreams*, there is a book with the similar title *Dreams and Allegories* with no overlap of content. They are first-rate poems-in-prose, with intensely feminist and fantastic content. A small collection called *Dream Life and Real Life* includes a novelette about the murder of a little girl, that can be interpreted as a ghost story; this, too, is a feminist collection and worthwhile.

I also liked Barbara Emrys's essay on Charlotte Perkins Gilman, though I don't believe her utopian writings are worthwhile. Something to bear in mind is that hundreds of these novels were written by Victorian women, and Gilman doesn't rise above the norm. Sad to say, most scholarly overviews of utopian novels look exclusively at men's works, which were the distinct minority, since the genre was chiefly women's domain. The utopian novels are badly dated in almost every case. Emrys's and Cline's essays, taken together, give the impression that women's fantasy of the day, though of interest, is marginal as literary art, and most of the examples chosen are indeed marginal. Again, however, in short story art, there are many authors, especially of supernatural stories, whose work remains vital and enjoyable without the least allowances or apologies made. A single example is Sarah Orne Jewett; I'm presently editing her collected weird stories, *Lady Ferry and Other Uncanny People*, for a children's book line. Most of these stories have been unavailable for up to 90 years, but are every bit the equal, or even better than, her noted classic, *Country of the Pointed Firs*, which itself includes a supernatural interlude, by the way. Jewett was a lesbian and a feminist, but of course my

introduction, for young readers, can't talk about that!

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AUSTRALIA

In Aurora 24, Valerie Eads refers to Stanislaw Lem's famous comments about

*The Left Hand of Darkness* as having appeared first in "one of the academic SF journals well over 10 years ago". This gave me a strange turn. To be lost in mists of time already!

My magazine, *SF Commentary*, was of course never an academic journal, although some people at the time treated it as such. There was no academic SF journal at the time except *Extrapolation*, which is perhaps why *SF Commentary* was the only magazine at the time publishing articles by Lem.

In 1971, Lem's agent and friend, Franz Rottensteiner, sent me a translation of Lem's long review of *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Much of that review, and the exchange that followed between Lem and Le Guin, was reprinted as a footnote (of all things) to the introduction to the famous anthology, *Women of Wonder*.

Lem's discussion was not trivial and not sexist, but raised a number of problems connected with the type of novel that Le Guin attempted with *Left Hand* problems that might even now be insoluble. Ursula Le Guin was so pleased with the detailed attention that Lem paid to her book that she wrote to him directly, and they have been friends ever since--so much so that Le Guin wrote a firm protest about the cavalier way in which the SFWA treated Lem some years ago. As I remember, she resigned from the organization about the matter.

Well, that list of details sounds pretty stuffy...at least it gets the details right. The odd feeling was of becoming a mere whiff in history, just barely remembered, while at the same time still pounding the same typewriter I used for that long ago issue of *SFC* (No. 22) and whirling the duplicator handle. I changed the name of the magazine from *SF Commentary* to *The Metaphysical Review* because they don't publish novels like *The Left Hand of Darkness* any more, and I don't hear from Lem or Le Guin (for good reasons, which I happen to know), and I would rather discuss all sorts of things other than SF. But 1971/72 was a nice time for me in fanpublishing. Please excuse me my bit of nostalgia.

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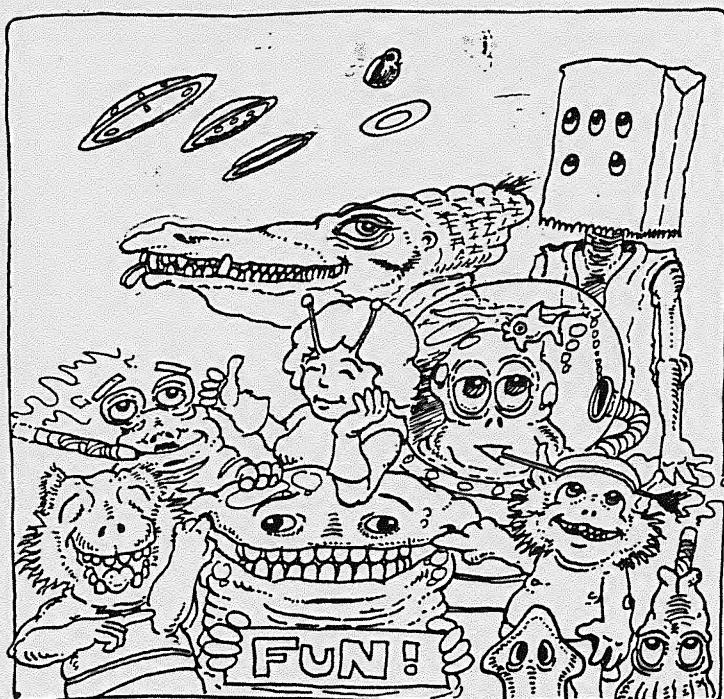
As usual, I find *Aurora* 24 very instructive and great for my reading list. The whole atmosphere, however, makes me think of, not an SF writer, but a mystery one. This is Amanda Cross, who has written a series of books featuring Kate Fansler, a middle-aged professor of English. I can relate to Kate because, like me, she was brought up with a set of stated and unstated rules that she repudiated...yet she cannot completely forget her upbringing. She sometimes finds herself with conflicting feelings. I have not found a better writer to keep me aware of changes and the feminist movement.

For myself, I found my first feminist thoughts roused by a book by Dorothy L. Sayers--*Gaudy Night*. I read it in my teens. In this book there is a phrase that sticks in my mind to this day: "He must have his womanly woman, do you think?" The idea that to a woman truth should be more important than making some man happy was, at that time, a revelation to me. I am pretty sure that no one thinks of *Gaudy Night* as a feminist book, but that is what it is to me. Most people, when concentrating on Sayers's books, think of Peter Whimsey, but I find Harriet Vane far more interesting.

The other day I was reading *Days of Grass: After the Fall of Humanity* by Tanith Lee. This is the world conquered by aliens with human refugees living underground. Not a new idea, of course; in fact, one way or another, I have read of this theme for years. I reflected as I read that when I first encountered this plot, the main character would most certainly have been male, whereas here it is female. It is also much better written and much more realistic than it would have been when I first started reading SF.

I am not, however, in sympathy with the wealth of fantasy published nowadays. Just one more witch queen or sword-wielding Amazon and I will puke.

Hoping you are not the same!



**Leland Sapiro**

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Probably Never Heard of"...How about names like Claire Winger Harris, Leslie F. Stone, L. Taylor Henson, that shudda been listed, but weren't?

**Buck Coulson**

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I don't notice women being suppressed in science fiction; of course, science fiction as a whole is still looked down on by big-name critics as not being quite literature. But then, I've never had anything but contempt for the sort of critics Russ is talking about; they've been contemptible ever since they began trying to define "great" literature among current writers. Of course, in the Good Old Days, *Astounding* was presumed to be for men only, but the other STF mags used women writers. And even *ASF* had MacLean, without a male pseudonym.

Note to Millea Kenin; even the idea of real men is relatively recent, and a reaction to the hippies who came just before the current women's movement. Certainly, none of my teachers in the 1930s would have said that "real men" didn't use words like beige; it was just assumed that all men were real, and they could use whatever words they wanted to. You think women are put down today...read a typical *Saturday Evening Post* story from the 1930s or 1940s.

But what does Suzette Elgin think about being called a saint? (I bet I can guess...)

I never had to re-evaluate Andre Norton. Her stories weren't what brought me into the field (I came in via Heinlein and the *SEP*), so I never over-rated her, and I read every one of her science fiction books, so I never under-rated her. She's outstanding as a writer for juveniles, but merely "good" as a writer for adults. I don't know of any of her books that an adult wouldn't enjoy, but there are several writers that an adult will enjoy more.

Geeze, I thought everyone had at least read "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. (Shame on you if you haven't.) Of course, it hasn't been reprinted lately, but it's in enough older anthologies.

Katherine MacLean was probably better-known by an earlier generation of fans than she is today, mostly because she had more published back then. Certainly, when I got into fandom, and for a few years afterwards, she was generally considered in the same light as H. Beam Piper or L. Ron Hubbard; one of the better writers, but never quite tops in popularity.

Oh, come now. I have material by both Mrs. Oliphant and Marie Corelli, and I'm not an antiquarian, bibliographer, or reader of best sellers. In fact, I don't think I've read Corelli's books, though I own some, and bought them with the intention of reading them Real Soon Now. I know I've read Oliphant in supernatural collections.

*Star Giant* was definitely not mediocre. I've read worse books, but not many of them; the writing ability of Skinkle (I'm not sure I believe that name) is down there with that of John Russell Fearn and Robert Lionel Fanthorpe. (Who are, incidentally, the two most prolific writers of science fiction in history, who both wrote under numerous pseudonyms.)

Of Tom Porter's list, the only ones I haven't heard of are Louky Bersianik, Joan Bodger, Maureen Duffy, Sally Gearhart, E. L. Konigsburg, Ruth Park, and Rochelle Singer. You might as well add Melisa Michaels to the list; I'd never heard of her before getting her second novel for review this week.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a letter of comment on Jeanne Gomoll's essay, "An Open Letter to Joanna Russ", which appears in this issue.]

**Joanna Russ** Dear Jeanne,  
**Seattle** Thanks very much for your  
**Washington** essay. It's an important one and I  
hope you can give it as wide circulation as possible.

What you're talking about is the rewriting of history by the "gatekeepers of culture"--Dale Spender's phrase. A fine writer, by the way, you should really read the first couple of chapters of *Women of Ideas*. She documents this sort of stuff happening vis a vis feminism (It's happened with things like class over and over again, too, and racism.) for at least 300 years. Actually, other writers have gone back and found it going on from at least the 16th Century in English.

I'm enclosing a reading list (my latest). How can I ever stop being a teacher! But I'd also recommend Tillie Olsen's *Silences: When Writers Don't Write*. And Evelyn Fox Keller's book on women and science--that is, the metaphors and beliefs underlying scientific belief. It's called *Reflections on Gender and Science*.

Trouble with printed lists is they don't fit anyone.

You're right; when I wrote *How to Suppress etc.* I didn't include "She wrote it but it was just a fad and it's over now". They've been saying that for 400 years, too!

This time round, though, as with the Left, there's been much more historical scholarship and much more open theory. I'm working on a book trying to connect up all the stuff that's been written during the past 16 years right now--and have read more than 300 books.

One of the ways of suppressing knowledge of the past is by insisting that everyone involved was so boring and not "fun". I left that out, too!

Do you mind if I use parts of your letter in the notes to my book (if I ever get to write the damned thing)? I'd like to quote you, along with about 25 other women who've written me, detailing the counter-reaction that's in full swing.

By the way, Samuel Delany insisted that this "me-decade" business was aimed at homosexuals and women!!! That is, "They should be putting me first, but they're putting themselves first, how disgusting". A lot of reactionary talk about "the family" today is really a cover for the interests of Christian white men (some Jews, too, I have to admit). Oh, people can behave dreadfully!

### Joanna Russ's Reading List

Anzaldus, Gloria; and Morgan, Cherrie, Eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*  
Bleiner, Ruth, *Science and Gender*  
Brownmiller, Susan, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*  
Chesler, Phyllis, *Women and Madness*  
Ehrenreich, Barbara; and English, Deirdre, *For Her Own Good*  
Faderman, Lillian, *Surpassing the Love of Men*  
Gordon, Linda, *Women's Body, Women's Right: A History of Birth Control in America*  
Hooks, Bell, *Ain't I a Woman*  
Johnston, Jill, *Lesbian Nation*  
Lourde, Audre, *Sister Outsider*  
Masson, Jeffrey, *The Assault on Truth*  
Morgan, Robin, ed. *Sisterhood is Powerful*  
Rich, Adrienne, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*  
Smith, Barbara, *Home Girls*  
Spender, Dale, *Women of Ideas* •



# An Open Letter to Joanna Russ

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Ms. Russ

It was raining steadily one morning, so I left my bike

It was raining steadily one morning, so I left my bike locked up in the basement, grabbed a book to read, and took a bus to work. The book was *Burning Chrome*<sup>1</sup> (Arbor House, 1986), an anthology of stories written or co-written by William Gibson; Bruce Sterling wrote its preface. I started with that.

It's a 15-minute bus trip to my office. I should have had the time to at least finish Sterling's short introduction and maybe even to start on one of Gibson's stories. But I got sidetracked.

In fact, I felt as though I had been punched in the stomach. I may have to give up trying to finish reading that introductory essay because I keep running painfully against a few sentences on the very first page that send my mind whirling and my anger growing until I have to slam the book shut with a muttered curse--just like I did that rainy morning on the bus. I won't be able to get on with actually reading the book and Gibson's stories (which I expect to enjoy), until I've told someone about that sentence and about my reaction to it.

So I'm writing to you about it, Ms. Russ, because I think I've just discovered another strategy to suppress women's writing. You wrote the book, *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (University of Texas Press, 1983), describing in gory detail all the different ways that have been used to disallow, prevent, discourage, disbelieve, discredit, devalue, ignore, categorize, debase, forget, malign, ridicule, redefine, reevaluate, and otherwise suppress women's writing. I'm sure that you meant to warn us with your book--to warn us that the suppressive strategies are still around, armed and dangerous--and that it's important for women to recognize them and to work against them. But still, I remember (or perhaps I imagined) an up-beat ending to your book and I'm surprised that there really is no happy ending. That the business is still going on today.

You observed some of the strategies that suppress women's writing: "She wrote it, but she wrote only one of it", or, "She wrote it, but she had help", or, "She wrote it, but she's an anomaly". Well, the late 1970s and early 1980s spawned many women SF writers who wrote quite a bit of highly-praised fiction. The old strategies don't quite work. Here's the new strategy: "They wrote it, but they were a fad".

It was not one or two or a mere scattering of women, after all, who participated in women's renaissance in science fiction. It was a great BUNCH of women: too many to discourage or ignore individually, too good to pretend to be flukes. In fact, their work was so pervasive, so obvious, so influential, and they won so many of the major awards that their work demands to be considered centrally as one looks back on the 70s and early 80s. They broadened the scope of SF extrapolation from mere technology to include social and personal themes as well. Their work and their (our) concerns are of central importance to any remembered history or critique. Ah ha, I thought, how could they ever suppress THAT?!

This is how:

In the preface to *Burning Chrome*, Bruce Sterling rhapsodizes about the quality and promise of the current new wave of SF writers, the so-called "cyberpunks", and then compares their work to that of the preceding period:

The sad truth of the matter is that SF has not been much fun of late. All forms of pop culture go through doldrums; they catch cold when society sneezes. If SF in the late Seventies was confused, self-involved, and stale, it was scarcely a cause for wonder.

With a touch of the keys on his word processor, Sterling dumps a decade of SF writing out of critical memory: the whole decade was boring, symptomatic of a sick culture, not worth talking about. Now, at last, he says, we're on to the right stuff again.

All the people who were made nervous or bored or threatened by the explosion of women's writing and issues now find it safe to come out and speak out loud of their dissatisfaction. Of course, it's safer to criticize generally ("It was a self-involved, "me-decade", and nothing worthwhile was created.") than to say specifically what they mean. (The women writers of the

<sup>1</sup>This essay should definitely not be read as any kind of review of *Burning Chrome*. The single paragraph that I quote here was taken out of context (though probably not out of meaning), and should be viewed as one of those breaking-the camel's-back life experiences--not as a sample of the content of the book or even of the essay from which it is excerpted.

70s bored me because I didn't care about their ideas; I felt left out." [It was a boring fad.]

This new strategy not only attempts to detract from the critical assessment of SF writing by women, and to belittle the accomplishments of women in SF fandom (which I'll write about later in this letter), but it has also been turned against the women's movement as a whole. For the last couple years I've begun to suspect that the phrase, "the me-decade" is really a euphemistic attack on the changes made by the women's movement. The phrase is both inappropriate and misleading.

The changes brought about by the women's movement were, of course, rooted in egotistical choices made by individual women. In fact, huge numbers of us rejected the traditional role of anonymous, self-sacrificing helpmate that has so long trapped women in unhappy marriages and unrewarding jobs. We began caring for ourselves more than we cared for others. But the ironic judgement of the men who found themselves cared for less well than their fathers had been, is that women who are not selfless must be selfish. The phrase "the me-decade", then, with its pejorative tone, rejects all of the positive, vitalizing effects brought about by the healthier, stronger, more capable women flourishing among us. For that reason alone, it is an inappropriate label. But like all the other near, decade-naming labels, it is crucially inaccurate as well, because artificial boundaries of dates that end in zeros can no more properly encompass all the names, events, and ideas of a movement than can a catchy phrase. Both abridgements (decade-labeling in general, and "the me-decade" in particular) are part of a very effective strategy of suppression. "They wrote it, but they were just part of the me-decade"

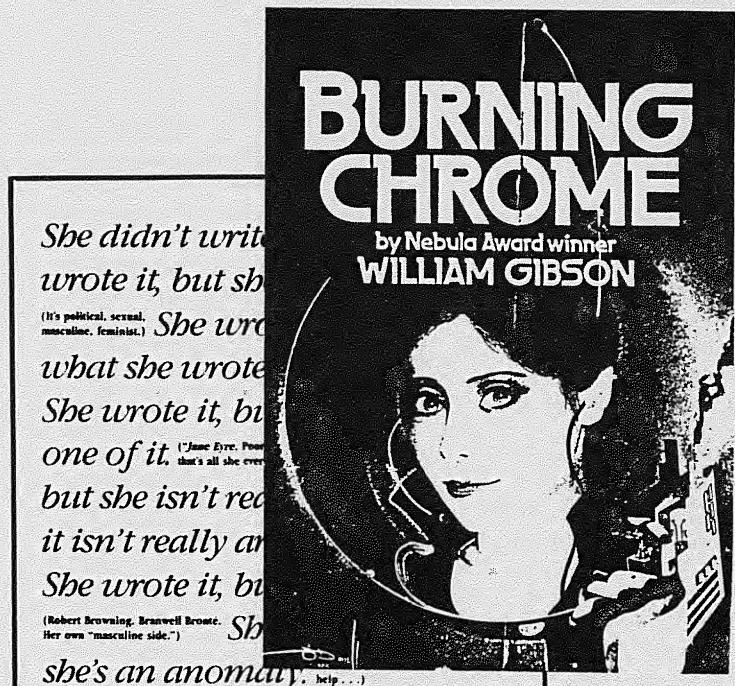
A growing number of people don't remember that SF in the 70s heralded the grand entrance of many new women SF writers. As time goes on, the two statements, #1, that SF was boring--or faddish--in the 70s, and #2, that women's writing and issues were boring, appear to be mutually exclusive and new readers are lulled into ignorance. Not everyone, of course, shares Sterling's opinion of 1970s science fiction. For instance, many people remarked that it was a shame that James Tiptree, Jr. had turned out to be a pseudonym for female SF writer Alice Sheldon. "He" was, they said, one of the very few exceptions to the general rule that seemed to preclude all but women as important SF writers in the 70s. At least it seemed so at the time. From 1953 through 1967, there had not been one single woman to win a Hugo award for fiction. Between 1968 and 1984 there were 11, and the increase of popular SF writers who were women was an exciting event in the 70s. Anthologies of SF by women were published not only for the novelty of their authorship, but for the significantly different way that women were writing SF. Their emphasis on character development and human interaction completely changed our expectations of the genre.

But fairly often of late, I've heard or read the disparaging, all-inclusive judgement of boredom made about 70s SF (in general), and about fandom, too. I worry that this viewpoint might eventually be generally accepted as the 1970s label, all evidence to the contrary.

Have you ever attended one of those fannish retrospective panels at science fiction conventions? You know--those are the panels held in some remote program room where a few well-known fans from the period ("fandom of the 40s", "fandom of the 50s" etc.) reminisce about the time, about what fandom was like, about who the BNF's (Big Name Fans) were, and about what feuds were going on? No?

Well, I've attended a few panels covering the period when I first got involved in fandom (the mid-70s), and I'm always amazed at how unrepresentative the memories of the panelists seem when I compare them to my own recollections of the time. I used to put the phenomenon down to the same mysterious "Babel Gas" that confuses convention attendees and causes them all to recall totally different conventions. Maybe that's it, I thought: Now that the era is passed, we all recall totally different decades. That's a very fannish theory, but it's not convincing. I don't think it's too egotistical of me to expect some overlap.

Fandom is supposedly cemented together by tradition and memories held in trust and passed down to future fannish generations by word of mouth and fanzine. It seems that a whole big chunk of memories has gotten entirely misplaced. For instance, here is a list of some of my memories of the late 70s. None of these events has ever been mentioned at any of the retrospective fandom-of-the-70s panels that I've attended.



## How to Suppress Women's Writing by Joanna Russ

★ In 1974, Big Mac's programming included the first women and science fiction panel. We have Susan Wood to thank because she fought for it against vociferous convention committee opposition. We listened in the standing-room-only audience in spite of the heckling by men who thought the whole thing was a bore. (Some of them still think it is a bore, apparently, although their heckling technique has evolved since then.) We kept talking after the panel ended in a packed, standing-room-only lounge for several hours afterward. It was an exhilarating, exciting, unbelievable gathering of people, overjoyed to have found one another. None of us used the word "boring", to describe the experience.

★ That gathering eventually led to the founding of *A Women's APA*, which became one of the most popular APAs around for several years. When we kicked men out of AWA, the controversy spilled out of the apa into fanzines, letters, and gossip in general fandom. Eventually, too, English women started their own women-only *Women's Periodical*, which generated similar controversy.

★ *Janus*, the fanzine I worked on in the 70s (It later became *Aurora*.), was one of the most well-known zines of the time, and only the second feminist SF zine ever to be published. (The first was Amanda Bankier's short-lived *The Witch and the Chameleon*.)

*Janus* earned three Hugo nominations and raised a hue and cry for suspected, vile, "bloc voting." People--it was alleged--were voting based on their interests and politics, and if *Janus* hadn't been feminist-oriented, it wouldn't have been nominated for a Hugo. Of course, we didn't agree; there was no conspiracy. But no matter what the reasons were for *Janus*'s Hugo nominations, these accusations only pointed out the importance of the women's movement in fandom, even in the opinions of its detractors.

★ At SunCon--the Miami worldcon in 1977--fans organized against the just-legislated Dade County anti-gay laws with buttons ("Happy Gays Are Here Again"), parties, and an hysterically funny, satirical masquerade entry, "Slave Boys of Gor".

★ When Phoenix won the worldcon bid for 1978, the site turned out to be a problem in that, subsequently, NOW organized a boycott of all non-ERA-ratifying states, which included Arizona. Guest of Honor Harlan Ellison spearheaded a campaign to raise fannish awareness of the situation and wrote a passionate letter which was published in and commented upon in dozens of fanzines, including *Janus*.

★ Women and SF panels started to appear at conventions all over, though strong opposition was mounted by concoms and fans who complained bitterly that feminism just wasn't fannish. WisCon 1 was nicknamed "PervertCon" by some of these fans who were upset by WisCon's encouragement of feminist, lesbian, and homosexual programming. Feminist panels have now become so uncontroversial at cons that jokes are made about the so-called generic "Women and SF Panel"--though the real things seldom feel generic to the participants. On the contrary, they have encouraged diverse and energetic discussions whenever scheduled. WisCon, the Madison

SF convention, regularly organizes a dozen or so programs related to women's issues. Usually these panels amount to at least a quarter of WisCon's heavily programmed schedule, and they range from "Feminism 101" all the way to academic, fannish and speculative program items.

★ The late 70's was the time when "rooms of our own" were opened at many conventions to give women space to gather and talk alone together without hecklers. The first such room was organized at WesterCon in Vancouver in 1978, by Susan Wood. The fact that fewer such exclusive spaces are planned now and the fact that there are fewer people heckling feminist discussion, illuminates the changes in the atmosphere and the generally raised consciousness of fans and society in general.

★ Things have changed a lot in SF fandom. In a few years the percentage of women increased so dramatically that women don't seem to be an endangered species at cons or in fanzines anymore. Science fiction has changed so dramatically that I get fewer confused reactions when I use the phrase "feminist science fiction", whereas in the past people thought the term must be an oxymoron. These changes didn't take place in dark closets. In fact, we still hear men who weren't even members of *A Women's APA* complaining about the women-only rule (invoked at least 10 years ago!). But judging from the fuzzy memories of some fans today, you'd almost think these changes must have been made secretly, behind locked doors and with muffled whispers...

Just as 1970s women's frequent presence in professional Hugo nominations now seems in the process of being camouflaged with expressions of boredom with the period as a whole, it may be that fannish history is being whisked under the rug as so many dustballs. I was interviewed by a woman from the Women's Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin recently, and was a little surprised by how few names of female SF writers were familiar to her. Are we, perhaps, working hard to preserve the art of "lost" women writers--digging through dusty archives to read, collect, and advertise our forgotten ancestors' work--only to lose track

of the work done by women just a decade before us? Let's try to keep a truer perspective of our history, so future women don't have to dig it up and publish a special "Under-Appreciated Women SF Writers" issue of *Aurora* to spotlight it.

Today I sit in the audience at all-male "fandom of the 70s" panels (and so far, that's the way the panels I've witnessed have been filled, by men only) and don't hear anything of the politics, the changes, the roles that women played in that decade (except sometimes, a little chortling aside about how it is easier now to get a date with a female fan). The prevailing picture of that decade painted by these panels is of an over-serious, rather boring, too academic, lifeless period between better times, between remarkable fannish eras that (unlike the 70s) had good, reprintable fan writers.

I don't think there's a conscious conspiracy to cover up the work of women. Many of the guys up on those panels are friends of mine, and they'll be horrified to hear me even suggest they were involved in any kind of even vaguely sexist activities. For the most part, these friends

supported us, shared our excitement, and seemed to admire the work of the new women writers. These men wrote to *Janus*, attended feminist panels, and were involved in the discussions about sexism and politics. Sometimes they even lectured us about not being feminist enough, about not being assertive enough, about not taking enough responsibility for ourselves.

Was this involvement of fleeting importance for some of these men? Is it just a coincidence that I hear male commentators in the media referring to feminism as a fad that has now passed? Maybe it's not so much wish-fulfillment working here as guilty self-criticism. Some of them have found more exciting interests (cyberpunk writing, for instance), and may have honestly begun to forget their earlier interest in feminism. Unfortunately, a lot of women seem to be catching this mood and agreeing with such frequently heard statements as, "Fannish writing was academic/ boring/ too serious in the 70s. Today's fannish, humorous/anecdotal writing is so much better."

There is a measure of truth to the observation that the writing done by fans in the late 70s was more academic than the quantitatively more personal/humorous early 80s writing.

Unfortunately, that tends to make people assume that the qualitative judgement which accompanies this observation has equal validity. But it just doesn't follow that the different, lighter, less SF-oriented writing of the early 80s is intrinsically better than the sort of writing that was done in the late 70s. Different times encourage different sorts of writing.

Well, there's an obvious solution to this problem I have, isn't there? I should stand up at those retrospective panels (maybe even try to get

included on them) and join in with other women in the audience and add a few of my own recollections to those of the panelists'. And we should all keep up critical pressure for balanced retrospectives, anthologies and reprints (fannish and professional). If we ourselves forget, why should we expect new generations of readers and fans to dig up the truth about what really happened?

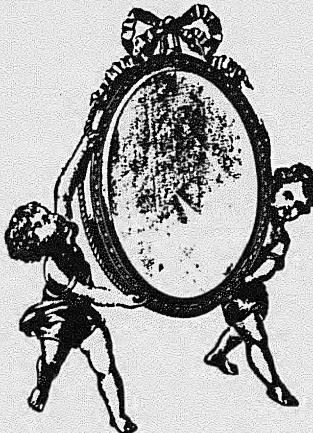
As you suggested in *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, Ms. Russ, preserving our art and our pasts is work with which most women have little experience. And inertia so much favors men's work being preserved over women's. But this preservation needs doing if we aren't going to be perpetually reinventing the same ideas.

*Aurora* is on the brink of either great changes or, potentially, a failure of energy. *Aurora* is one of the few resources fandom can claim that devotes itself to SF and women. This fanzine is floundering now primarily for lack of energy: not money, but people, encouragement, participants, you. If you think you need *Aurora* or the potential it offers, you should get involved by writing letters responding to this issue, or contributing articles or artwork for the next issue--if you're out of town and interested--or by getting involved personally in *Aurora*'s production. Right now, *Aurora*'s future is shaky. All depends on whether this issue can attract enough fuel in the form of people, interest, and especially, letters of comment, to fire up the staff and convince them to continue publishing.

I want to see all of us remembering and talking about the 70s phenomenon so that we can build on the experience (and not have to do it all over again in another generation). One small way to keep the discussion going (and to tell the story to new women fans) is by keeping *Aurora* going.●

## The Mirror's Tale

by Pat Stewart



"What a ugly duckling",  
The mirror said,  
Speaking reverse,  
As mirrors will,  
As the damsel preened,  
Bejewelled, bejewelled,  
Bedecked to kill.  
A ruffle here,  
A satin bow,  
"My dimples are divine",  
The dumpling said,  
How can I miss?  
I'll shine!"

"Oh, spare me, Pudge",  
The cheval groaned,  
"And, stripes go better  
Vertically than eight across!"  
The doorbell chimed.  
"This I've got to see,  
This pransome hince,  
Probably as gross as she!"

She skipped, she flounced,  
She tripped, she bounced,  
She opened the door  
On the second ring.  
Her beau was a beaut  
In black patent shoes  
And hair to match;  
A buttonhole, a vest  
A walking stick. What class!  
"Oh, bulgeous one,  
You haven't got a chance!"  
Bewounded the glass.

He kissed her once;  
The stripes combined;  
Again, the bows untied;  
Once more; forty dimples  
Smoothed, and, shrinking  
Sideways, arm-in-arm,  
The stunner and her beau  
Left and slammed the door.  
"Well, I'll be chipped",  
The mirror said,  
"This cracks me up!"  
And shattered on the floor.



# Humor in Star Trek

## The Trouble with Tribbles: A Critical Analysis

by Susan Balliette

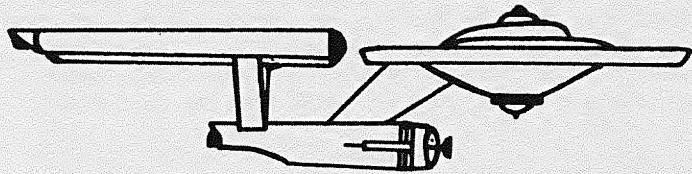
The famous *Star Trek* episode called "The Trouble With Tribbles" (written by David Gerrold) is typical, of the type of humor for which *Star Trek* is known.

As usual, the Federation and the Klingons are competing, this time under the terms of a peace treaty to see who can develop the undeveloped Sherman's Planet most efficiently and thereby claim it as their own territory. The action takes place on the Federation's Deep-Space Station K7. The main characters are Kirk (our Hero); Spock (Our Other Hero); Captain Koloth, the Klingon ship's commander (the Heavy); Nilz Baris, the Federation Under-secretary of Agricultural Affairs in this Quadrant in charge of the development project for Sherman's Planet (read "bureaucrat"); and Cyrano Jones, an independent space scout and small-time entrepreneur with questionable ethics (in other words, a con man).

A quick synopsis of the action: Jones brings tribbles--furry ball-like animals which are apparently born pregnant, they multiply so fast--to the space station where Baris' quadro-triticale wheat is stored for use on Sherman's Planet. A Klingon spy poisons the grain and the tribbles in the storage compartments die en masse, making everyone wise to the Klingons' plan. The spy is uncovered and Sherman's Planet is saved from poisoning. Meanwhile, Cyrano Jones is running around giving and selling tribbles. Soon the Enterprise is filled with tribbles, the Klingons and Enterprise crew have an old-fashioned "sailor on shore leave" bar fight, and Kirk and Spock trade insults with Baris. The humor hardly ever lets up.

One of the ways humor is used in this episode is to reveal the social class values of the characters.

First Scotty--the Scot--and Chekov--the Russian--argued about which liquor, scotch or vodka, is the drink for a "real man". Such corny nationalism in an international crew, in a future where we've presumably out-grown such petty concerns, is of course funny. Also, despite their enemy status, the male crew members of the Enterprise and the Klingon ship who engaged in the bar-room brawl exhibit the same macho values. The Klingons start name-calling to provoke a fight and their insults are pretty funny, especially considering how exaggerated they are, for example, comparing the Enterprise to a garbage scow. Once again the men are exaggerating to prove their own manhood. Then the fight breaks out and I think the visuals are among the funniest scenes in all of *Star Trek*. Part of the humor comes from these



supposedly civilized, decorous Enterprise men fighting with the Klingons like drunken sailors on shore leave. They are 'way out of character--or are they? The Enterprise is always firing its phasers at somebody. Its ostensible mission may be exploration, but often its actual mission is the same as the Klingons': to gain territory for the Federation. Throughout the *Star Trek* episodes, the Enterprise and the Federation are portrayed as peace-loving, only fighting those uncivilized Klingons and other villains when absolutely necessary. But this bar-room brawl humorously transports our 20th Century macho ethic into the future: war is war and men are men, no matter what century you're in.

Then there's Cyrano Jones, space-faring entrepreneur. He stands in humorous contrast to the honorable, macho, military men of the Enterprise. He has the soul and values of an Old West patent medicine con man. He sells Flame Gems and Antarian Glow Water, both of which are saleable because the water is required to polish the gems. I find it refreshing to see values from Middle Eastern bazaars in a program which so often had white, middle class, male and capitalistic American values. (By the way, I'm not against capitalism; I just like to see alternatives.)

During the bar room fight Cyrano Jones fixes himself two drinks for free while the storekeeper/bartender is off calling security. Jones' open and flagrant defiance of the honesty



ethic is just plain funny because he does it so openly. The contrast between seeing Jones defying convention openly and seeing others walking the straight and narrow is funny and fun to watch.

At the end Jones is ordered by Kirk to pick up every tribble on the space station or face a sentence in a rehabilitation colony. Jones tries to weasel out of his punishment in a very funny scene. When Kirk finally corners him, Cyrano Jones says, "I'll do it." However, we can't help but think that Jones won't pick up all those tribbles after all. Cyrano Jones is my favorite character because, like Rhett Butler in "Gone With the Wind", he defies convention and does so humorously.

The last character whose social class values I'll analyze is Nilz Baris, the Federation bureaucrat. After discovering the poisoned grain/dead tribbles, he yells a tirade of threats against Kirk, including a Star Fleet Board of Inquiry where "...they will roast you alive." That imagery is kinda funny since Kirk has faced far worse threats. Baris continues, "And I am going to be there, Kirk, to enjoy every minute of it." Nilz Baris is a large-scale petty bureaucrat who makes threats but doesn't have the courage--or power, we might guess--to carry them out without Star Fleet command's help. He's in the class of government officials everywhere who throw their weight around but have others do the dirty work.

We've looked at three social classes of men in this story: the military, a con man, and a bullying official. Each class has had different social values. Which class do you prefer?

Also--where are the women in all this? Where should they be? (But's that's another article. We're only talking humor here.) •



# The Little Green Martian Fare

by Carol Poster



You want to go where? ... The UN? ... Sure, I can take you there. I got to earn my living somehow, don't I? ... Hey, wait a second, Mister --you a mister? I never can tell with you Martians--Just hold on. I don't mind driving you. I ain't got nothing against you; and we live in a free country where every green blob with tentacles has got rights, but I'm not allowing slimy tentacles on my back seat. You can put down newspapers, you can sit on the floor, but no tentacles on the seats. ... You say your tentacles aren't slimy? Sure, and I'm the Queen of England. ... New anti-discrimination laws? Those and a token will get you on the subway. Why don't you just go ask your Russian pals to drive you around? ... I don't got to do nothing. This is a free country. You think that just because I'm a woman you can push me around? Well, I got news for you Mister: I got my rights and I'm going to run my cab like I see fit. I'm not some bleeding heart liberal to be pushed around by an overgrown octopus. ... You got a treaty? So you got a treaty. Those politicians think they can push us around. Well, I'm telling you, I don't have to drive you if I don't want to. And if you don't like it, why don't you go back to where you came from? I'm not having slime all over the backseat. ... You'll call a policeman? OK, call one. Just go ahead and call one. I got my rights. ... Well, what are you waiting for? The Last Judgement? Getting out money to bribe him with? Foreigners are always trying to pull something. What's the color of your money, anyway? Green. Like the rest of you. Probably the slime. ... The policeman told you to mind your own business and he'll mind his? About time the cops started minding their own business around here, instead of butting in where they're not wanted. ... All right, Mister, get going already. What are you standing around like that for? You dead or something? ... Or maybe you're just stupid? ... You're not? Well, get moving then. I got a job to do. And I got my rights. This is a free country. •

# Magic Mamas, Trembling Sisters, Puritans & Perverts

by Joanna Russ

reviewed by Hank Luttrell

This book of feminist essays (Crossing Press, 1985) was loaned to me because I was interested in the subject matter of the essay "Pornography By Women, For Women, With Love" -- which is about K/S fan fiction. If you know what that is, you are already smiling and interested. If not, let me explain that this is about love relationships between Kirk and Spock of *Star Trek*.

I have always loved science fiction. I haven't always loved *Star Trek*. I've come around a lot on this subject. There was a time when I was rather bitter toward things like *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* and other popular media science fiction. I regarded it as simple-minded, diluted, cotton-candy versions of the real stuff, and feared that this pap would crowd out the more seriously-intended science fiction.

I try to keep an open mind, and I guess I now see this stuff as an important part of the educational function of science fiction, in that it has provided stepping stones into the larger field of SF; maybe it has even induced some people to begin to read. I won't want to get into this too much in this review; I've written extensively about my thoughts on science fiction and SF conventions and their educational functions in an article in *The Comic Buyer's Guide* last year.

To return to the Russ essay cited above, fans who are familiar with *Star Trek* fandom may be amazed by the analytical manner in which the K/S stories are considered. You probably thought the stories were just for fun! Actually, Russ's essay makes it clear that the stories are fun. It is startling to see these stories seriously studied and placed in a feminist context. Those readers who are not familiar with *Star Trek* fandom will be even more amazed by the nature and extent of the phenomenon.

Russ's essay on K/S fiction illustrates one of my ideas about popular culture. It seems to me that commercial artforms, like TV, movies, comics or popular fiction, sometimes become something much more than "merely" entertainment. Members of the large audience--which in part defines popular culture--bring their own individual viewpoints and interpretations to the products; absorb the symbols and vocabulary, the lexicon; and in using all of these elements as part of their shared experience, adding their own human dimensions, create "real" art forms and real ways of communicating important and interesting thoughts and ideas.

Obviously I've been getting around to saying that this is what *Star Trek* fans have been doing when they create their own stories, especially these K/S stories, which are a rather extreme example. They add an erotic element to the TV product that goes beyond that envisioned by the show's original writers and producers.

My interest in this book goes beyond this one essay. As soon as I got the book in my hands, I started reading the introduction and found it so interesting I couldn't even skip ahead and read the *Star Trek* essay which was my original intention. I just read the whole thing from cover to cover. One major theme of the book is a feminist theoretical analysis of the issue of pornography and censorship, always important issues, especially in light of the Commission on Pornography's report to Attorney General Edwin Meese. I am very sensitive about this issue, as a bookseller. I was delighted with Russ cited the article which I've been trying to get people to read for 6 years, "The Politics of Porn: Can Feminists Walk the Line?", by Deirdre English in the April 1980 *Mother Jones*.

My reading of this book suggested that Russ was an opponent of censorship. When the local fan group got together to discuss this book, I realized that this is more than an attack on censorship, but rather a celebration of the variety of human expression. K/S stories are a clear example of an erotic fantasy with real meaning to some people, in contrast to commercial pornography or the sexual images of men and women in TV advertising. Russ supports individual rights, and doesn't want to take judgmental stands. An interesting aspect of this book is the extensive autobiographical context of the essays, and the warmth and humor of the discussion. Russ takes a lot of effective shots at the unholy alliance of feminism and the right wing against pornography and for censorship. So go and read this book. You will find it provocative and valuable.●

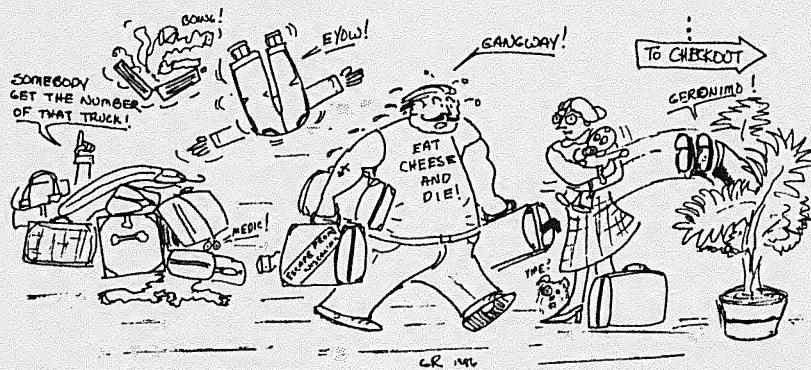
Joanna Russ

*Magic Mamas,  
Trembling Sisters,  
Puritans & Perverts*

Feminist Essays

# Con Report:

## A Review of Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*



At Wiscon 10 I observed an interesting scene at the hotel check out. A very large man standing at least 6'1" and weighing at least 332 pounds simply walked up to the hotel registration line and in a booming voice said, "I'm in a hurry and want to check out".

Even though there were at least five or six people waiting in the check-out line, one of the clerks came to the registration window and simply said, "May I help you, sir?" and cheerfully checked him out, instead of than chastising him for the overbearing lout that he was.

A few moments later a young woman who had been standing at the end of the line came up to him and said:

"I am a woman and a doctor, I have been waiting in line for the last five minutes and you, you just barged in. I am really peeved."

The fellow answered, "You and Joanna Russ really shouldn't want to be Mrs. Robinson. There's more to power than being able to push around bartenders and desk clerks".

I thought to myself, I wonder what in hell this guy is talking about, so I stopped him and asked.

He asked me, "Are you familiar with the movie *The Graduate*?"

I said, Yes, I thought I had seen it on television, but I did not know what it had to do with Joanna Russ.

He said, "I am 41 years old. That movie was kind of a popular icon for my generation in the late 1960s. It was about Benjamin, a young Berkeley graduate, played by Dustin Hoffman, who did not buy into the system. Benjamin gets involved with a woman twice his age, Mrs. Robinson, played by Anne Bancroft. He has a little trouble making arrangements, like getting a hotel room, or getting a drink from the bartender. Mrs. Robinson has no such problem; with a snap of a finger she gets a room, a drink, or whatever she wants."

He continued, "I have read Russ's *The Female Man* and *When It Changed*, and in 1977 at the U.W. Milwaukee I heard Chip Delany read a Russ paper that dealt with the frustrations that a woman who may be superior to her male contemporaries in intelligence, athletic ability, and creative ability has being recognized as anything but a woman. Her speech is, very simply, about power, and I think she was off-base about it.

"First, in *When It Changed* she seemed convinced that when men came back to Whileaway after 600 years they would take over by weight of their stupid bulk. America was not able to win this way in Vietnam, and it not clear to me that when you have the drop on a man with a rifle that he is going to take over anything. For all of her power and evocativeness, Russ seems far too fatalistic."

"Secondly, Russ seems to think that one objective of power seems to be to push around flunkies. Power does not really have very much to do with that. I have been a flunkie all my life. In *Soul on Ice* in 1967, before he became bloated and Christian, Elridge Cleaver introduced the idea of super-masculine menials. Most of the men that seem to wear the masks of power are really nothing more than that.

"Lastly, I feel that the reality of power expresses itself in economics and if that could be recognized, then perhaps the objects of power and the desire could be more appropriately focused. In one sense at least, our power is determined by the perceptions of the possibilities in a situation, and our ability not to be manipulated by guilt which can steal our victories."

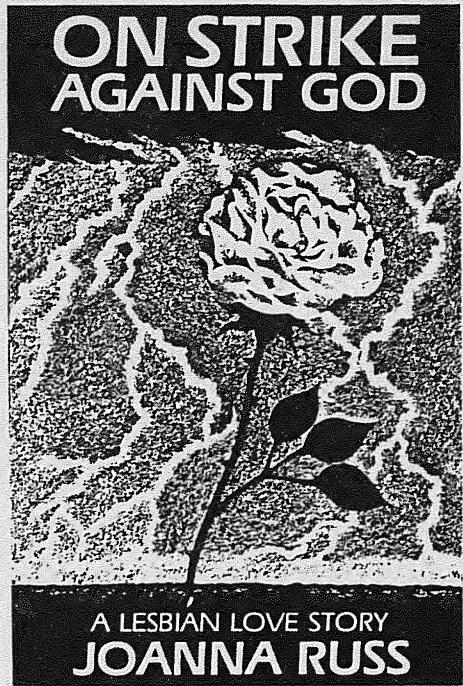
Then he smiled, his eyes lightened and he said, "Sorry, but I gotta go now. I have a truck to load. By the way, I'd like to hear a panel on this next year."

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reviewed by Philip Kaveny

Russ shows us how one can use the Schroedinger's cat plot device without bothering to invent a science to go with it. *The Female Man* (Bantam, 1975) is a compelling and, I found, demanding book to read. I read it like I would read James Joyce or Thomas Pynchon, as a kind of prose poetry in which she articulates the glaring contradictions that continue to exist for women in a man's world.

It is the kind of book that you argue with, think about, go back to, and want to discuss with others. Yet it grows out of the same garden as the other two. Sometimes I am restored when I think of the potential of this genre.♦



## *On Strike Against God*

by Joanna Russ

reviewed by Janice Bogstad

There's this club, you see. But they won't let you in, so you cry in a corner for the rest of your life or you change your ways and feel rotten because it isn't you or you go looking for another club. But this club is the world. There's only one.

While narrating the first lesbian experience of a 38-year-old professor, Russ's short novel, *On Strike Against God* (Cross Press, 1986), makes encounters with realistic and fantasy characters an excuse for a host of observations like the one above. Like the others, this one is a bombshell. Its truth lies in the articulation of shared experience, encounters, and realizations which many adult women share but few of us can describe in either fiction or non-fiction.

The work, reappearing six years after its first publication, acts like a healthy dose of *deja vu*, and, at the same time, a revelation. Characters in *The Female Man*—published in 1975—said some of these same things about men's egos and women's struggles. Here they are presented more baldly. It is still amazing that only a few years ago, the concepts expressed in this and other more recent books had not been articulated—yet they've shaken the foundations of reality. One reads through the book saying Yes, Yes—Why did it take us so long to realize that the problem was in the world and not in us? And wondering how fragile our new individual and collective consciousness still is.

*On Strike Against God* should be read or re-read to recapture this historical perspective, to remember what is so easily forgotten: that we have only just begun to understand our problems, much less work on solutions.●

## *The Zanzibar Cat*

by Joanna Russ

reviewed by Philip Kaveny

In this short story collection (Arkham House, 1983), which I bought for "When It Changed" the reader gets some idea of Russ's scope and ability as a writer. She is comfortable using a multiple number of narrative devices. She can as easily write in the style of the scientific romances of the turn of the century as she can tell a story in the post-modern narrative voice. Her style is not a conceit adopted for effect. Rather, she chooses the voice and structure which are best suited for the story she tells. Russ is one of the few writers that you can not get into the form-and-content argument about.●

## *The Two of Them*

by Joanna Russ

reviewed by Diane Martin

*The Two of Them* (Berkeley, 1978), by Joanna Russ is the story of a young woman from our time who is recruited by a time-traveller to work for a cross-time interstellar agency whose true purpose is never made clear. Irene jumps at the chance to cut out of her boring, middle-class existence. She and Ernst become partners and lovers.

Though there are flashbacks to her recruitment as a teenager, the main part of the story takes place about 20 years later. On an assignment to a planet settled by Moslems<sup>1</sup>, where women's freedom is severely restricted, Irene comes to realize that her glamourous, exciting job with the Inter-Galactic Trans-Temporal Authority is actually just as restrictive. No better, in fact, than the Earth she left behind. In her efforts to rescue a bright 12-year-old girl from the Moslem society, Irene also rescues herself—at a great price.

In keeping with the time travel theme, this novel's progression is not strictly linear. It also has a strong lyric quality that echoes the child Zubeydah's passion for poetry. The viewpoints shift from Irene to Ernst to Zubeydah, in fact to every character at one point or another. As readers, we have a definite advantage. A key advantage, in Irene's case. She is obsessed and distressed by her inability to communicate with Ernst. Even after so many years together, and in spite of his being a sensitive, caring man. She is dissatisfied with the routines their relationship takes. Routines that prevent her from explaining, prevent Ernst from understanding, what she truly means.

Taken allegorically, Irene is Everywoman. Her adventure entertains and teaches. The lesson is hard.●

<sup>1</sup>Interestingly, this world and some of the characters are based on "For the Sake of Grace", a short story by Suzette Haden Elgin. Russ dedicates this novel to Elgin.

# Rapunzel's Revenge: Fairytales for Feminists

by Attic Press



reviewed by Judy Goldsmith

This little book (Attic Press, 1985) jumped out at me, when I had no intention whatsoever of buying another book that day. I made the mistake of picking it up, and opened to "Cinderella Re-Examined" by Maeve Binchy. I had to have this collection! It is unfortunately expensive, since it is from a small press in Ireland. The cover page "...gratefully acknowledge[s]...all the women on the Women in Community Publishing Course 1984/85 who brainstormed this book into existence". If it were not clear that this was a community effort, the first story, "The Princesses' Forum", by Linda Kavanaugh, might have clued us in:

Once upon a time, all the princesses and heroines of fairy tales got together at Snow White's cottage to discuss the shortage of intelligent princes.

These stories are fun. They are the sorts of rewritings that many of us have considered. In one, Rapunzel Murphy participates in a drug testing program which makes her hair grow uncontrollably ("Rapunzel's Revenge", by the Fleet Street Fairies); in another, Cinderella goes into partnership with the king in setting up a tourist industry in the castle. Snow White

organizes the seven dwarfs into a miners' union--and applies for a job as a miner herself. These are not women waiting to be rescued by Prince Charming. They take matters into their own, entirely competent hands. They lift weights, have black belts in karate, and have good heads for mathematics.

There is very little mysterious or magical in most of these tales. The three bears live in the concrete jungle, and subscribe to *Save the World Monthly* ("Goldilocks Finds a Home", by Sue Russell). The basic assumption is that these women are socialists, and most of them are vegetarians. Rapunzel's rescuer is a woman who grows her own food, and studies the properties of herbs. And Rapunzel has a hand in her own rescue, as well. Gone is the passive heroine; those princesses granted sharp wits, by nature or by fairy godmothers, use their wits. Some marry princes, some live alone, and some live with women friends. One princess is cursed with a "happily ever after", but is blessed with the promise that it will only last ten years, and then she will escape ("The Plastic Princess", by Anne Claffrey).

The volume contains a Feminist Word Search, and various and wonderful illustrations and cartoons. It is a perfect book for reading out loud. I only wish I had a small child (someone else's child) to share it with. I suspect that much of the magic depends on our familiarity with the fairytales in their original, or at least familiar English, translations. Yet many of these tales stand alone. They are small triumphs of woman over corporations, greedy individuals, ill-wishing fairy godmothers, and the like. If you don't want to spend the money on it, buy a copy with a friend or two, to share. I am sure the individual authors would approve.●

## Something Shady

by Sarah Dreher

reviewed by Diane Martin

Subtitled "A Stoner McTavish Mystery", *Something Shady* (New Victoria, 1986) is a sequel to *Stoner McTavish: A Lesbian Mystery/Romance*. The lead character, Lucy B. Stoner McTavish--Stoner to her friends--is co-owner of a Boston travel agency. She is gay. Her partner, the outrageous, impulsive, yet practical Mary Lou Kesselbaum, is straight. Stoner lives with her Aunt Hermione, an eccentric practicing (perhaps that's redundant) psychic. Stoner has an on/off semi-requited lover named Gwen Owens, a high school teacher. They became friends, and then more-than-friends in Dreher's first book, when Stoner helped rescue Gwen from her crazed husband. Aunt Hermione has a premonition about Claire Rassmussen, the missing

sister of one of her clients, and sends Stoner on a trip to Maine to find her--and incidentally, to pick up a new familiar. Both Aunt Hermione and Mary Lou conspire for Gwen to accompany Stoner on this trip. The trip is a rousing success. Claire is rescued, the new familiar is found, and Gwen and Stoner's relationship moves into a new phase.

I don't have enough experience with lesbian fiction to tell how this book stands up within that genre. I have, however, read plenty of straight mystery fiction, and viewed in that context, *Something Shady* is one of the best. The love story is presented naturally, matter-of-factly, in a way that focuses on love and feelings rather than sex and gender. The mystery/adventure is convincing, in spite of--or maybe because of--the psychic overtones. The quality that appeals to me the most is the authenticity of the characters, especially the women. It is a more than a treat, it is a relief to read about women who could be real, whether good or bad. There are men in this book, too, both good guys and bad guys. The male characters are not as finely-drawn as the female ones, but they are recognizable human. *Something Shady* will leave you feeling both involved and entertained..●

# A Feminist Dictionary

by Cheris Kramarae  
& Paula A. Treichler

reviewed by Diane Martin

**A Feminist Dictionary**, by Cheris Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler (Pandora Press, 1985, 587 pp)

It's very hard to "review" a dictionary. Who can have opinions about definitions? Right. Of course, that's the whole point. *A Feminist Dictionary* (Pandora Press, 1985) is, in some respects, a traditional dictionary. It is, for example, organized alphabetically. In other ways, it more resembles an encyclopedia. Rather than focusing on parts of speech and pronunciation, with definition by way of synonym or description, the many entries are quotations (mainly of women) from throughout history. Also, the entries include phrases as well as individual words. There's plenty of cross-referencing. You can look up one word, like "pen names", and be referred to "androcentrism", "anonymous", and "naming", and from there to amanuensis, author, authority, eponym, hurricane, matronymy, new name, patronymy, print, and writing. It's possible for the reader to entertain herself this way for hours, as if reading one of those "endless quest" books. It's also possible to read this book straight through, from A to Z (though you'll probably be intrigued into taking a few side-trips). And it also makes a fine reference work. Following are some sample definitions, to give you the flavor of this book:

**A-Mazing:** Within a culture possess by the myth of feminine evil, the naming, describing, and theorizing about good and evil has constituted a maze/haze of deception. The journey of women becoming is breaking through this maze--springing into free space, which is an a-mazing process. (Mary Daley, 1978)

**Dear Reader** was the winning entry in the 1982 contest to find a non-sexist, natural substitute for Gentlemen (Dear Sir or Madam), etc) as a salutation in a letter to someone in an organization whose name and title you don't know. (Albert Joseph, 1983)

**Man Junky:** In order to make sure that we will see ourselves as half-people, with an addition to getting our identity from serving others, society tries hard to convert us as young women into "man junkies; that is, into people who need regular shots of male-approval and presence, both professionally and personally. (Gloria Steinem, 1979)

**Perversion:** The wish to have a vagina smell like a strawberry. (Midge Lennert and Norma Wilson, eds, 1973)

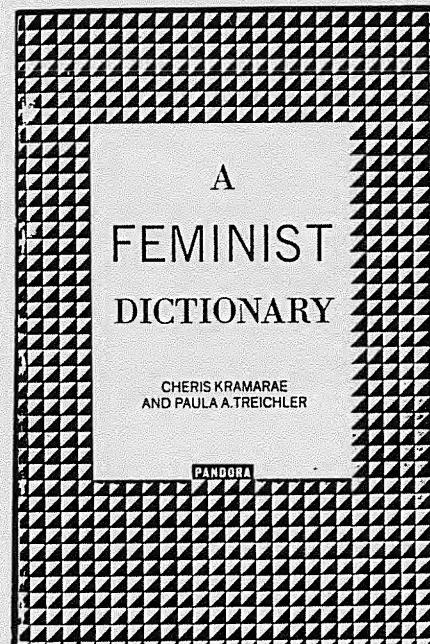
**Phrase Book for the Foreign Country of Feminism:** In an open letter to male colleagues, Joanna Russ suggests why a given man's attempts

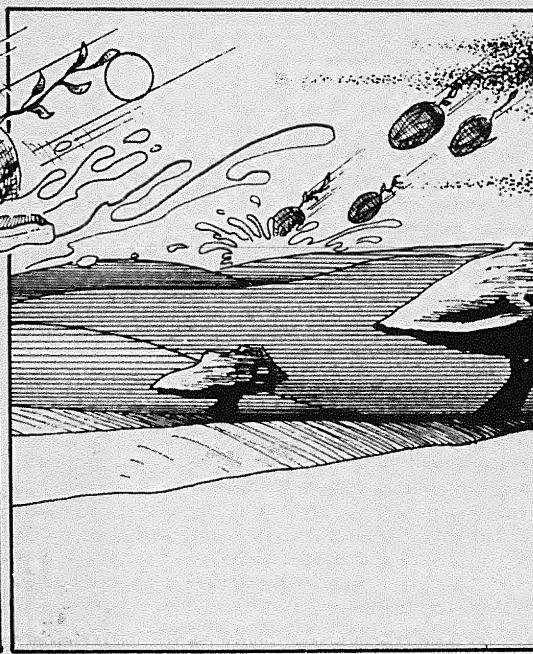
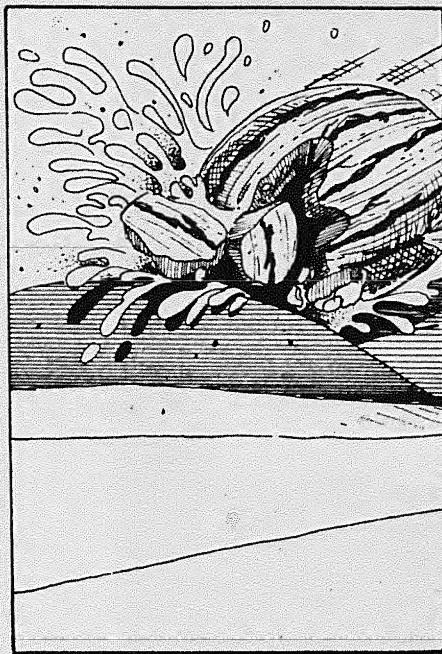
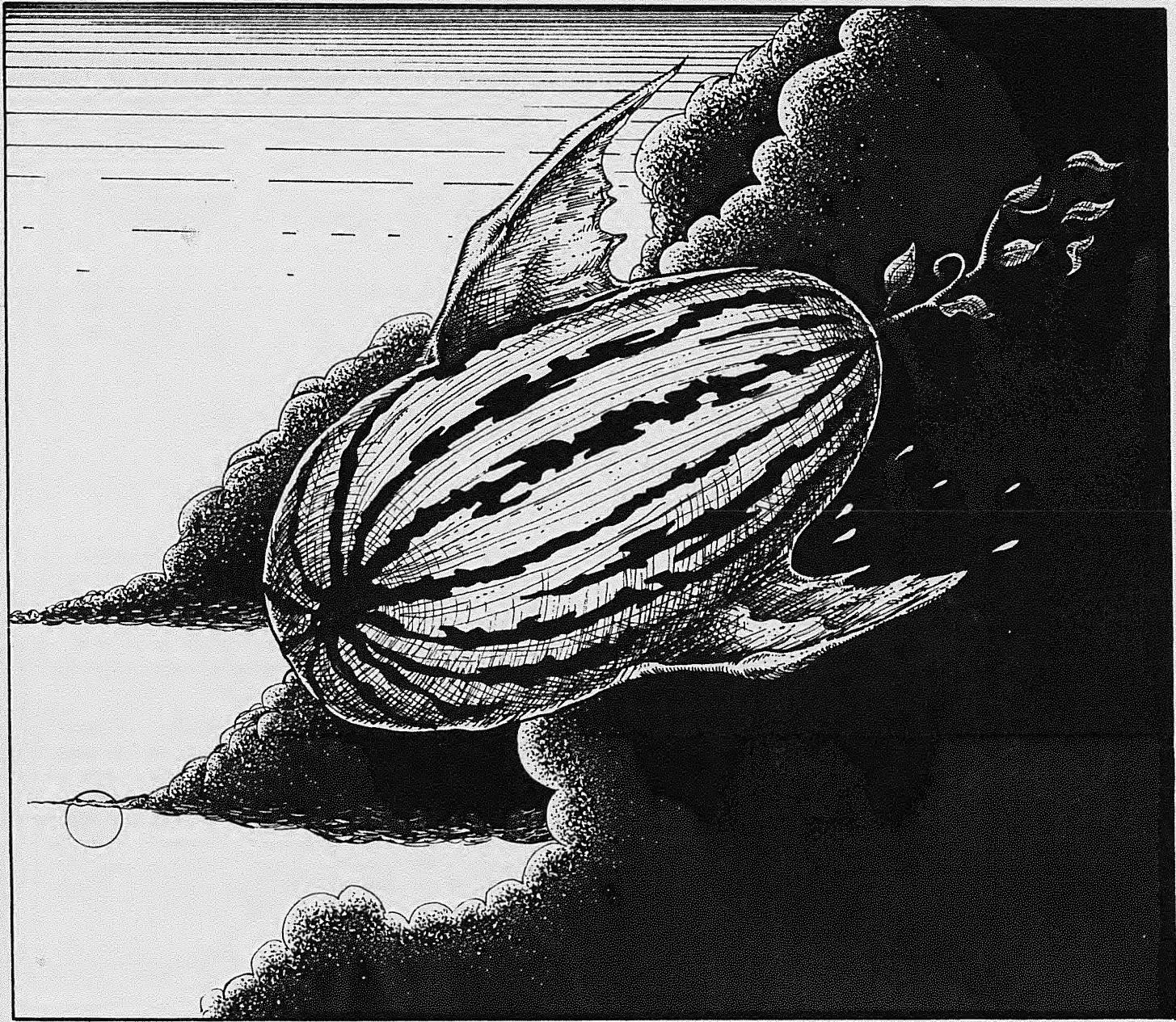
to be a "goodguy" often fail. As tourists in a foreign country are given a phrase book so that without actually learning the language they can still complain...so I am going to give you a phrase book for the foreign country of feminism. There'll be a difference, though--this book translates what you say. It translates what you say into what you mean:

What You Say	What You Mean
I'm all for women's liberation but...	I'm scared.
It was only a joke.	I find jokes about you funny. Why don't <u>you</u> find jokes about <u>you</u> funny?
We're hiring a woman. What do you think of that?	Kiss me. I'm a good-guy.
You can't expect change overnight.	And if we're lucky, never.

All sources are cited in a bibliography that runs over 70 pages. (It makes a fine reading list.) Most, but not all, of the sources are women, and are taken from academic papers, letters, magazine and journal articles, song lyrics, plays, works of fiction and non-fiction. Many, if not all, the "big-time" feminists of the 20th Century are represented: Brownmiller, Daley, Dworkin, Greer, Steinem, and Wittig, to name just a few. Plus hundreds of lesser-known writers from throughout history. You'll recognize names that have appeared in connection with *Aurora*, *New Moon*, and *WisCon*, some many times: Margaret Atwood, Camilla Decarnin, Teresa DeLauretis, Suzette Haden Elgin, Beverly Friend, Sally Miller Gearhardt, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Ursula K. LeGuin, Marge Piercy, Joanna Russ, and Susan Wood.

*A Feminist Dictionary* is an entertaining, educational, uplifting, inspirational reference work. •

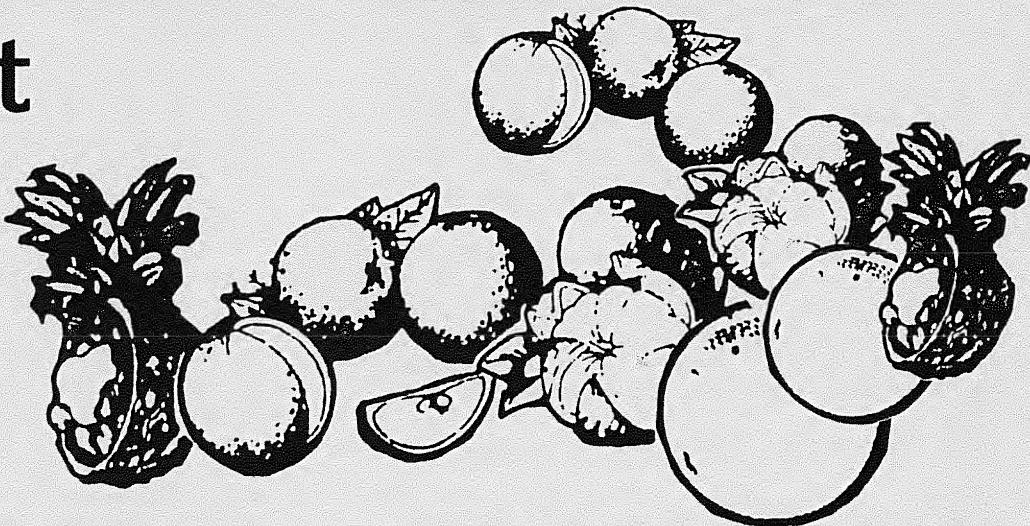




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# Bad Fruit

by Allan Morris



On the 16th day of September in 1981--a humid Wednesday afternoon it was--a mutant winged watermelon the size and shape of the Goodyear Blimp, having lain waste to the countryside near Brockton, Massachusetts the day previous, landed heavily on Harvard Square in Cambridge and, overripe and already rotting, crushed to death 17 passers-by, drowning a like number in its liquid wastes.

At the Massachusetts State House in nearby Boston, the Governor, moved though he was to tears by the carnage, breathed a sign of relief that the perpetrator had been silenced forever. He became less sanguine, however, upon being reminded by state agronomy experts that, upon impact, the beastly thing may well have strewn potentially lethal seedlings randomly throughout the area, perhaps setting the stage for similar tragedies to come.

Also to be faced was the possibility that there were other mature mutant melons of the winged variety lurking (dumbly lying, actually) in patches somewhere in rural New England (where even normal watermelons had not been known to grow before).

The usual, though possibly futile, precautions were taken by Federal, state, and civic officials, fearful of spreading catastrophe. The state militia and the National Guard were placed on Red Alert. An elderly brilliant scientist and professor of biology--a Nobelist no less--was coaxed out of retirement to help uncover and analyze seedlings and other mutants, if any, and seek ways of rendering them harmless--or at least friendly. He in turn insisted that his beautiful young daughter, a brilliant scientist in her own right, be brought in to assist him in his researches. Quite naturally, an arrogant but basically decent young lieutenant colonel of the United States Marine Corps was assigned to assist the father and daughter in whatever ways he could. As might be expected, he immediately earned the old man's fatherly affection and gradually melted the daughter's initial hostility into the syrup of undying love. Meanwhile, it almost need not be noted, in the Pentagon, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sat in almost continuous emergency session, the lights burned late in the Oval Office, and technicians worked 'round the clock at the Departments of Agriculture and Interior. A black cloud of gloom and impending doom hovered over the Seats of Power. And, while

evidence of hysteria was meager, there was a pervasive sense of dread in many parts of the nation.

In residential Cambridge, for example--and in Boston as well--a kind of aggressive, faintly manic, calm appeared to have overcome that part of the populace comprised of college students, undergraduate and graduate, and other young people who, having gone to school in the area, had chosen to pursue their lives near its comforting groves of academe. In the days following the mysterious mutant's tragic crash landing, the student absentee rate at the Boston area's many colleges and universities and in the business establishments of the center city was notably higher than normal. Greengrocers reported a rush on watermelons and, when the supply was exhausted, on honeydews, cantaloupes, casabas, and cranshaws as well.

Some held to the theory that mini mutant melons and seedlings of same had somehow mesmerized the young people of Cambridge into securing the fruit as a kind of sacrificial offering to whatever beastly fruits might be in the area, but this of course was far-fetched. What in fact had happened was that hundreds of the young men and women of the Boston area in general and Cambridge in particular had decided to pursue their own odd, ritual of symbolic supplication to whatever or whoever required it.

On Garden Street in one rambling old Cape Codder in particular, its four young occupants--two women and two men ranging in age from 26 to 31--had called in sick to their places of employment and seemed content to sit around the house smoking pot and snacking on varieties of melon several times a day.

A dinner (melon balls and iced tea), Janet Kresge, the house elder at 31--a teacher of composition at Tufts--remarked that perhaps she was getting too far along in life to be playing such silly games and that maybe the same could be said of her housemates as well.

Marjorie Halliburton, the youngest member of the household, respectfully disagreed, "I think we should stay put for a more few days anyway. Really--we've got to take a stand." Marjorie worked, when she worked, as a paste-up artist for graphic studios, having received her higher education at Rhode Island School of Design.

"A stand against what?", Janet challenged.

"Or in favor of what?", asked Timothy Erenberg, a brilliant young meteorologist lately of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He bit into a ball of cranshaw. "That's not what I'm hanging around the house for. I mean, hell, this isn't the same a 'Nam or the anti-Nuke thing. What are we dealing with here? A mass of water, pulp, and sugar. The thing's not even a dumb beast. It didn't even have a brain, for God's sake".

Behind a cloud of pot smoke, Rafe Diefenbacher disagreed: "How do we know whether it had a brain or not? The thing had wings, right? You know anything that's got wings that doesn't have a brain?" An assistant manager of a supermarket branch, Rafe had majored in logic at Boston University.

"Yeah, what about that, Timothy?", said Marjorie.

"Oh Lord", Janet moaned.

Marjorie said, "Janet, don't be so cynical. Rafe's right--the thing's got to have had intelligence. You know what I think? I think the Establishment's doing something kind of funny number on us. You know what it is with this Administration--they'd like nothing better than to squelch dissent and the logical place to begin is with the under-thirty set."

Janet rolled her eyes and feigned a sigh of relief, and said, "Well, I guess that lets me off the hook".

"Ho, ho, ho", said Marjorie without smiling.

Timothy pushed away his plate of melon balls. "I still don't buy the government plot bit", he said. El Presidente and that crowd around him just aren't smart enough to come up with something as weird as this".

"Well, then, who did come up with it?", asked Rafe, passing a roach to Marjorie.

"Alien forces, maybe", Timothy suggested. "Some cats from another planet who feel threatened by what we're ding to ourselves down here and are sending us a message to get our act together or else".

"Oh, God", groaned Janet. "What a collection of flakes we are". She took a deep drag on the roach that Marjorie had passed on to her, characteristic frown deepening as she exhaled the smoke. Then, the frown still intact, she began to giggle, and that in turn seemed to signal her housemates to do likewise.

In a sprawling, multi-gabled house set aside for him in Holyoke, Massachusetts, as a temporary headquarters-cum-laboratory, the kindly old professor of biology and scientist opened the door to one of the spare bedrooms to discover his brilliant young scientist/daughter having sex with his aide, the Marine Corps lieutenant colonel. The old man slammed the door shut and shuffled angrily off to his own room, muttering, "Damn it, where's the work ethic? I'd never have insisted they hire Sheila too, if I thought she was going to carry on like this. Damn! And I was just beginning to like that young man. Damn, damn, damn!"

A few hours later, seated in the Oval Office with his Chief of Staff, his principle pollster, and the White House press secretary, President Eberly asked for an update on the situation.

"Nothing new to report yet, sir", said the Chief of Staff. "No signs of seedlings, that's for sure".

"Harvey, I wasn't asking about seedlings", said the President a little irritably, staring at his CoS with slightly bloodshot eyes. "That's a downstream problem we can deal with later, assuming it is in fact a problem. What I want to know is are there any of those bid full-blown jibonies around and if so, how do we get rid of them?"

"We don't have a clue yet, Mr. President. "Not even after scouring the countryside and putting the best scientific brains we can find to work examining what was left of that thing. My guess is the whole thing's a clever hoax--some tricky little scheme to embarrass us. The whole area's a hotbed of ComSymps, you know--downright subversives almost, and that's a fact".

"Listen, Harvey", the President snapped, "I'm not interested in your guesses. That's not what I brought you down here for. Right now what concerns me most is facts only." He paused and his glare softened. "Personally, I happen to agree with you--That's my reaction, anyway. But we can't afford to take chances. Suppose we put out a story that the whole thing's a hoax and everybody calms down? Where'll we be if another one of those things shows up? Up the creek is where, and you better believe it. You agree, Lance?"

The president's press secretary nodded Yes, then said, "It's kind of amazing, Mr. President. We may be dealing with the quietest major emergency in the history of the country. We're not getting anything like real pressure to get to the bottom of this. The press room guys aren't asking too many questions, either. Not even the hostile ones that are gunning for us. Really, you'd think the whole thing was some kind of non-event. If we didn't know it actually happened".

"Interesting point", said the President. "Do we know for a fact that it did?"

"Our samplings say there's some skepticism on that score", the pollster said.

"Ah", said the President, "so Harvey's not the only one that's got hoax on his mind".

"Well, I'm not sure if hoax is exactly the word, Mr. President", said the pollster. "Something has a hoax. The readings I'm getting are that a lot of people are thinking what you just said--that maybe nothing happened at all".

"Well, I didn't exactly say that, Burt. And anyway, it's out of the question. There was all that water and the pulp and...and yes, the casualties. Let's not forget the casualties".

"Mr. President, I'm not saying I believe what people are saying. It's interesting, though, that people should be thinking that way. It's as if there's a kind of national denial of what you and I, all of us here, know to be the truth".

"Right", the press secretary agreed.

"Yes", chimed in the Chief of Staff.

The President turned to his press secretary, "Strange. But what I'd like to know is what we should be doing about it. Here, in this office. I don't trust the eggheads to come up with a rational explanation anytime soon and God know what will happen if we have another catastrophe on our hands.

"What I'm getting at is that I'd rather act than react. What I'm asking is, how do we position ourselves to turn this thing to our advantage, public-perception-wise, or at least to keep

ourselves from getting too badly hurt by events we can't predict and can't control?"

"We could declare a national emergency and institute martial law", said the Chief of Staff.

"Ixnay", said the President. "Dumb idea. Our enemies up on the Hill would have a field day with that one--not to mention the humiliation of having the Supreme Court cutting us off at the knees. Don't you agree, gentlemen?"

"Absolutely", said the pollster.

"In spades", added the press secretary. He said further, "But what we could do is invite Congress to interface with us on this. You know, seek their counsel, and all the rest. Then, if something goes wrong, we can say, Well why stick it all on us when those guys were just as responsible".

"Not bad", said President Eberly, but it doesn't sound dramatic enough. Let's put that on hold for a few minutes, OK? All right, Burt, it's your turn".

"Well, sir, this kind of strategizing is not exactly my thing, and I hope Harvey and Lance don't think I'm sticking my nose into what doesn't concern me, but if you don't mind, Sire, I do think that perhaps I might have a--"

"Out with it, Burt", said the President. "I can't stand the suspense".

"Right! Well, what I would do is have Agriculture put a ban on melons. Across the board. Indefinitely. No growing them, no harvesting what's on the ground, no importing. Nothing. Get rid of the problem at the source. Until, that is, we find out precisely what the source is".

"Great!" shouted the President. "I buy it. I buy it all! Good going, Burt. It's dramatic, it's dynamic. It says we're on top of things. Just terrific".

"Nice going", said the chief of staff. "except for one thing. The Farm Lobby--They'll murder us".

"Screw 'em", the President said. "They don't have the votes to hurt us much anymore".

"True", said the Chief of Staff.

The press secretary said, "It's kind of high-handed, though. What about Congress and the courts on that one?"

"Not the same thing", said the President. "The office of the President has the right to deal with natural disasters and the rest of it in any way it sees fit as long as we don't step on civil rights". He paused for effect before adding, "Or lean too hard on those boy scouts at the National Rifle Association".

Everybody laughed.

"Good meeting", said the President. "Good thinking. OK, gentlemen--let's do the necessary!"

At an exclusive men's club near the Watergate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives consented grudgingly to interrupt his bi-weekly pinochle game to take a telephone call from the White House Office of Congressional Liaison.

"Yeah?...What's up...You're kidding...Maybe you call it the only logical course of action, but I call it a little extreme...No. No, Ben, count me out. I don't want any part of it...Well, I'm sure the President would love it a lot if I got behind this, and I'd love to accommodate him, but...Fine, then. If he's prepared to go it alone without sanction from Capitol hill, that's his business. Then you don't need me anyway...Oh,

come on, Ben. That's a pile of bullshit and you know it. Look, I don't blame him for trying. I mean, if I was in his shoes, I'd try and get Congress to share the blame, too. Why the hell not?...Well, for one thing, are you forgetting where I come from? The melon growers in my district would have me beheaded, plucked, and eviscerated before I could bat an eye if I went along with this scheme...You want my personal opinion?...Off the record?...All right, I think it's a shrewd play. If something doesn't go wrong. Sure. He gives the appearance of dealing with a dangerous problem without jeopardizing too much of his support in the process. Smart move. If it works...Ben, please be so kind as to not appeal to my sense of patriotism. I don't need you to tell me what's patriotic and what isn't, understand? I'm just not going to run the risk of being blown out of the water when there's so little upside potential and so much downside risk. Listen, the boys are waiting for me to get back to the game. Tell the President Thanks, but no thanks--and that I sincerely hope he can bring it off. 'Night".

Admiral Hieronymus Bosh, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, pounded a fist down on the huge room-length conference table, vibrating it for all the attending be-medalled, be-ribboned brass to feel. "Gentlemen", he declared, it's the Soviets that are behind the. I'm convinced of it".

"And he kids you not", said his military aide, sitting as his side.

"Yeah", said Admiral Bosh, "and that lily-livered cretin on Pennsylvania Avenue refuses to do a damn thing about it, much less to acknowledge that that's what those Mongol hordes are up to".

"Ron," said General of the Army Falstaff from across the table, "please! That's the President you're talking about. The Commander-in-Chief. Our Commander-in-Chief. Let's give him the benefit of the doubt. Let's give him a chance".

"A chance to make us all sitting ducks? Is that what you mean? Bosh demanded.

"A chance to formulate a response", said General Falstaff.

His face beet-red now, Admiral Bosh shouted, "Formulate? Formulate? That senile fool's had three weeks to formulate. And what does he come up with? A ban on melons. My god!"

"Well, at least it's innovative, kind of", said Air Force General Ben Erricson from the far end of the table.

"Innovative, my ass", said Bosh evenly. He leaned forward as if to whisper in confidence and said, "listen, I don't mean to be cruel, but the poor bastard's evidently off his gourd and if there's anything we don't need steering the Ship of State at a time like this, is some flaky old pol who's got it in for the Farm Lobby. Gentlemen, we've got to take the bull by the horns, call a spade a spade, and face the compass North".

"And what" said General Erricson, "does that mean?"

"It means, said Bosh, a little louder now, "that the President's incapacitated and that the Vice President should take over temporarily".

"Who decided that?" Erricson demanded.

Bosh flashed a kindly smile. "I've been back and forth on the horn all morning with the

Speaker of the House. He's been jawboning with his crowd and with the Senate leadership and some of the folks up at the White House who shall be nameless, and things are beginning to move in the direction we want them to go".

"you mean the direction you want them to go", General Fallstaff challenged.

"Wrong. The leadership on Capitol Hill's behind me on this. They're getting unbelievably amounts of shrapnel from the boonies about this dumb melon thing, and feel it's time to act".

"My God", said Erricson, his voice barely under control, "sounds to me as if you're talking coup, Hieronymus".

His face even redder, Bosh slapped the table loudly with the flat of his hand to silence the cacophony of gasps, sighs, shouts, and groans that filled the room. "Ben", he said, pointing a finger at Erricson, "you're entirely out of line on that one. You ought to be ashamed. What do you mean 'coup'? My God, man, this is a democracy we live in and don't you ever forget it. Yeah, sure—I want the Old Man out of the way for awhile. But nobody's flexing any muscles. We're going through the process. It's all legal, Ben, all on the up-and-up. you have my word for that".

"And he kids you not!" declared admiral Bosh's staunch aide de camp.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 14 (AP)--President Eberly today relinquished "temporarily for reasons of health" his executive responsibilities.

Vice President Fanbelt will serve as acting president during the interregnum.

Details of President Eberle's condition were not immediately available. Press Secretary Clasher said a "clarification" would be issued shortly.

A high White House official whose identity was not given said the President has been experiencing "hemorrhoidal discomfort" for the past several weeks.

It is not known whether the condition will require surgery.

Vice President Fanbelt said he has had "unlimited" access to Presidential briefing books and characterized himself as "well-informed" on the key issues presently facing the Oval Office.

President Eberle's whereabouts were not known, and White House aides declined to discuss them, adding that details of his illness and the approximate date of return to the White House will be given in "due time".

Meanwhile, in a sprawling old house in Holyoke, Massachusetts, a Marine Corps lieutenant colonel asked a kindly old professor/scientist if melons have pituitary glands.

"No, dummy, they do not!" snapped the KOP/S.

"No need to be testy, sir", said the lieutenant colonel.

"Father, I think you're being beastly to Flemington", said the KOP/S's comely daughter.

"Well, if I am, it's just too damn bad. If your precious Flem can't stand the heat, well, he ought to get out of the kitchen". The KOP/S paused, apparently for effect, and took in the young man and woman over his half-glasses before

adding, "Out of the kitchen and back up to your bedroom, poor dears".

"Father! How could you!"

"That's right, sir, said the marine officer. "You've got no right to--"

But before he could utter another word, a hail of kumquats the size and density of meteors slammed down on the old house, instantly demolishing it and its inhabitants.

In the Cape Codder on Garden Street in Cambridge, Janet Kresge poured fresh coffee into two tall tumblers half-filled with ice. She handed one to Marjorie Halliburton. Janet held up her glass as if to make a toast, and said, "Well, here's to the Apocalypse!"

"and to Armageddon", said Marjorie, extending her glass. "Let's not forget Armageddon".

"And to Dark Forces everywhere", said Janet before taking a deep sip of coffee. She clinked the ice in her glass. "Where", she asked, "are the male persons?"

"Back at work", said Marjorie. "They've gone back, I've gone back, and you never stopped. So, normalcy reigns once again in our happy household".

"Normality", Janet corrected. "Normality reigns".

"Yes and no", Marjorie said, "depending on which dictionary you use. Listen, you heard the news, I suppose".

"No--what news?"

"From Holyoke. Something strange happened. Some old house got smashed to smithereens".

"A tornado?"

"No. Are you ready for this? Something fell on the house. Something big and, uh, pulpy, and--"

"Watermelon, right?"

--pulpy, and orange, and liquid".

"What kind of melon has the orange meat?"

"Don't know. Don't even know if it was melon. Or even fruit. Very puzzling to the people out there, but they think it's something like what happened near the Coop, and if that's so, it's bad news".

"Yeah, Janet murmured. "When are the guys due home?"

"I think they'll both be here for dinner".

"Good. Maybe it's time for a little consult. We really ought to decide whether it's safe to be in this house for the time being".

"Marjorie added, "Or out of doors, or somewhere in the countryside, or anywhere. If whatever the hell it is continues to do whatever the hell it's doing, who knows where the best place to be is".

"Scary, huh?"

"Yes".

Tears began to slide down Marjorie's cheeks. Janet put her iced coffee down and her arms around Marjorie's shoulders. "Hang in there, kid", she said.

"Marjorie pulled away from her, a hint of earnest puzzlement in her stricken expression, and said, simply, "Sure, what else is there to do?"

In the office of Vice-President Fanbelt, Admiral Hieronymus Bosh said, "It's your finger that's on the button now, Barney. maybe it's time to let the Soviets know for once and for all that

this shit's got to cease, that they better punish the assholes who are responsible and that they damned well better be prepared to come up with some stiff reparations".

"Ron", said the Vice President, "you're talking dangerous stuff. We've got no evidence that they're behind this".

"Of course we don't!" Bosh spat. "Good God, Barney, they're too clever to leave spoor around. I tell you we can't afford to let those bastards get away with it".

"But--"

"Listen, Barney, am I asking you to blow 'em out of the water with everything we've got? No! I'm a man of peace, Barney. It's the mark of a military pro. No, sir! I'm not asking you to go off the deep end. Not yet. Warn 'em first. Make 'em grovel. Make 'em pay up. Then, if they don't want to play ball, we let 'em have it with all we've got. Right?"

"Right. No. No! That's not what I mean. I mean, listen, Ron, I need to think this out. If we only had more evidence that they were really behind this".

Admiral Bosh shrugged his shoulders and pursed his lips and dug himself deeper into the sofa he was sitting in. "OK, Mr. Vice President. Suit yourself. But it's not just your ass that's up for grabs. Everything's at stake here. Why, those gooks could be planning right this very second to lay open the whole North American continent for all we know".

"Ron, I've got to talk to my people about this. I'll get back to you".

"OK, Barney", said Bosh, pushing himself out of the sofa and pulling straight the heavily medalled and ribbons jacket of his uniform. "Suit yourself. But don't take too long. Indecisiveness is a curse, you know. It's what did in His Nibs--Right?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, temporizing, failing to act decisively, trying that dumb ban-the-melon fiasco as an expedient--that's what sent Eberle to the loony hatch".

"Bosh, you're out of order on that one", said the Vice President sharply. "Getting away for a while to deal with a little emotional stress isn't the same as going crazy".

"True", Admiral Bosh agreed, gently adjusting the crotch of his razor-creased trousers, "but it's something to think about anyway, Barney. A word to the wise, you know".

"I distinctly did not order that catsup be mixed into my chocolate pudding", said President-in-Absentia Eberle to the nurse who had wheeled his lunch into the padded, heavily guarded room. "Will somebody kindly get the White House chef down here to cook me a decent meal for a change? My God, no wonder this place is loaded with psychotics when they have to eat this slop. Now, listen here, young lady. This time I'm not taking no for an answer. You call the White House right now and tell them either I'm coming back today or they better quick-like-a-bunny plug in the electronics down here so I can start running the country again like I'm being paid to do. Now listen, young woman, this time I'm not fooling around. As a matter of fact I'm getting out of this place right now and...why are you pressing that thing, nurse?...Don't you know who I

am?...What?...Who are these men? How dare you come into my room without knocking?...Get your filthy hands off me!...Get...What is it?...Get that thing off of me...Get it off!...Do you hear me...DO YOU HEAR ME? THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS ORDERING YOU TO GET--"

According to what could be gathered from the newly unearthed ancient documents after they were chemically treated to restore their legibility, what seem to have happened back then was this:

On the third of November that year, large parts of North American, Central and Eastern Europe, Micronesia, the Indian subcontinent, northern China, and western Samoa were bombarded--literally bombarded--by strangely outsized, apparently rotting, fruit of all kinds and descriptions.

Green grapes as big and heavy as medicine balls, giant Freestone peaches, Baldwin apples, massive nectarines, mangoes, tangelos, and tangerines, immense fuzzy kiwis, Bosc pears the height of tall buildings, lemons and limes and big Bing cherries, and massive blueberries and blackberries and raspberries and boysenberries and strawberries, and mountain-size pomegranates, and huge Hawaiian bananas as tall as totems, and plantains and breadfruit and coconuts as big as hills, and gigantic grapefruit, and plums, figs, dates, and...and on and on and on. And on--until much of the civilization of the Free and Captured Worlds were decimated through drowning and pulv-erization and crushing.

We can only be grateful that some humans and certain species of animal life somehow managed to survive that terrible period to repropagate the Earth and make it ready for future disasters.

The genesis of the "Fruit Wars", as they are now beginning to be known, is still to be determined, but science will surely find an explanation with which to slake our curiosity. And, if a documented explanation cannot be found, one will, of course, be invented so that the mythology of our declining planet will hold no more mysteries for its reduced and fearful masses.●



# The Needle on Full: Lesbian Feminist Science Fiction

by Caroline Forbes

reviewed by Judy Goldsmith

I had a sudden moment of hesitation recently, when I pulled out Caroline Forbes's *The Needle On Full* (Only Woman Press, 1985). Perhaps this was not a good choice to read aloud to the predominantly straight group present? My doubts were unfounded; everyone enjoyed the story "The Visitors" as much as I had on my first two readings.

What makes me reread a story? I read "The Visitors" for the first time for the flow of the story, the plot. I reread for specific images, and for the use of language. Paragraphs, as well as images, stuck with me:

"Frank", Margot's tone was hushed. "It's one of those flying saucers isn't it, and them, they're little green men." Margot had seen *Close Encounters*, and cried her way through *ET* three times. She knew.

There is something so wonderfully ordinary in this story. Margot remains true to the form of a proper Englishwoman, throughout. When the aliens have incinerated Frank, and are gathering their courage to investigate the house, she has a cup of tea! In the midst of chaos, the cup of tea reminds us that we are in present-day England, surrounded by the mundane world. "That was the wonder of tea, she thought, it made anything you were doing seem normal if you had a cup." Margot proceeds to treat the aliens as visitors, and their visit as good fortune. I will leave the descriptions of the aliens themselves, and their visit, to future readers.

The other stories in the book are set in various worlds, including possible variations of this one. It is not the creation of new worlds that makes this an exciting collection. Rather, it is the focussing on women we can recognize in all these worlds that makes these stories satisfying to read. Whether we are with four very

different women in a high-tech, low-human relations world breaking out of the rituals of isolation to find each other ("Night Life"), or with a women's community debating the appropriate response to a group of men in primarily female post-holocaust London ("London Fields"), we can identify with them. They drink tea (The women in "London Fields" drink mint tea.) and disagree and rebel against their mothers, and create communities.

The collection includes the novella, "The Comet's Tail". It is the story of a long-term space voyage, chronicling not only the ground saga and politics of such an endeavor, but primarily the lives of two women isolated for many years from everyone except each other (and the occasional contact from Earth). We feel the weight of years in Vivienne and Franci's relationship, as it slowly evolves from two isolated people to a community of two. These are not ideal lesbians, creating instant community, instantly in love. Their love is a product of a life shared, not out of their own choice, but the choice of a man. And their love is not the enduring love of fairy tales, but a real, human emotion which responds to the pressures of two very different people, isolated from the rest of the world, perhaps forever. These women are also scientists, honored back on Earth for the important and brilliant work they do while in space. It is good to read about scientists who are women and still very human, unlike the superwomen we find in much of traditional (male-authored) science fiction.

There are some weaknesses in the collection. There are gimmick stories, such as "The Transplant", and ones worth reading just once. But on the whole, the stories are about women we could sit down with, drink tea with, and talk to. They have full lives as scientists, students, wives, daughters, mothers, and lovers. This, more than the politics, makes this collection a feminist one. If we accept Marilyn Frye's definition (in *The Politics of Reality*) of a lesbian as a woman who sees women, then these are clearly lesbian stories. I strongly recommend this book to anyone, regardless of sex, or sexual preference, who wants to read stories about realistic women.♦

## A Brief Survey of Women in Comics

by Hank Luttrell

I don't want anyone to suppose that this note is going to cover this topic comprehensively. I mean, there have been books written on the subject. (I recommend the recent *Women in Comics* by Robbins and Yronwode, Eclipse Books 1986). It is appropriate to try to cite some of the news and recent developments for women creators in a field where they are important and popular, comics.

My favorite comic published by the two major publishers is *Angel Love* (DC), humor in a modern urban background, by Barbara Slate. I think the art is as well designed and expressive as John Stanley's *Little Lulu*. The current series ended with #8, with a great cliffhanger. The title is to return in several months with a 32 page special.

Among the small press, black and white comics, *Women's Comics* is one of the oldest and most popular undergrounds. It was Last Gasp Publishers second title, but recently switched to Renegade Comics, who promise to publish it more often. *Tits & Clits* has had 6 issues. Since it is one of the funniest undergrounds around, it is great that all the issues will soon be in print again.

My favorite new underground is Dori Seda's *Lonely Nights*, her first solo book, after having stories in *Women's*. Lee Marrs, who contributed to both of the series mentioned above, recently joined the flood of funny animal comics having long titles with *Pre-Teen Dirty Gene Kung Fu Kangaroos*.

Hey, gang, I know. You can write and let us know what who your favorite women cartoons are, and why.♦

# Feline Eyes



by Paul Grussendorf

That morning was unlike others. Well, sure, at first all mornings start the same. I awoke and stretched and bathed, first my hands and feet, then the rest of my sinuous, hairy anatomy. I get upset if something disturbs this morning ritual.

But after that I noticed something different about Maria's routine. Not about her routine morning affairs; her sweet latin-accented chatter, her face, olive mediterranean skin, aglow as usual, but the tone of her voice told me something was different. At the breakfast table she explained she had a date that evening with her boss.

I've met her boss, very charming, leather-jacketed Italian, bearded intellectual, self-made macho, but nice fellow, a likeable specimen from the land of the Renaissance five centuries after its decline. It's not unusual for Maria to go out with charming men, usually European, herself being from that place and master (mistress?) of four languages, although "cat" is not one of them.

She explained to me, as she pushed me down from the table, that she was inviting the Italian boss over for dinner and a peaceful evening in front of the fire, since his wife was out of town. She is friends with his wife, so she wouldn't think of letting anything improper happen, besides she never would anyway, George trusts her so.

George is Maria's husband. He lives in a place called Oregon, where he is finishing his doctorate degree in rat dissection (poor bastards), and Maria and I live in Washington, D.C. in a lovely neighborhood with lots of squirrels. I've never been to Oregon but they say it rains all the time, no place for a cat. As soon as George finishes his studies he will join Maria and me in an ecstasy of love and harmonious relationships and enlightened living together and behaving like New Renaissance creatures.

Maria stays in D.C. now because she works at the World Bank, in the section monitoring the World's population. She had me spayed after my first litter. I don't know if there's a connection, because she always says she doesn't want the responsibility of children. They would be my

children, not hers, and besides, George wants children, and mine are very cute; but kittens are a pain in the neck, so it's just as well that after having experienced Motherhood I can relax now and have sex without anxiety.

Still, her tone of voice was a bit more erratic, unsure of itself, especially as she explained to me in the same breath how she wouldn't let anything happen, but that she was really horny, not having flown out to see George in almost two months. Also, when she's upset her English pronunciation gets sloppy and she gets "sheet" and "shit" mixed up. Having lived with her three years now, I know both English and Italian, though only passively, and some scatterings of French, which she only uses when she's entertaining one of her Lebanese friends, or when she has invited over some pathetic Washington-American, who thinks that his use of French demonstrates a sterling mastery of history, military science, and love science. The science of copulation, or how to get from a woman everything he wants while convincing her he is giving her everything she wants. A technical impossibility, but these scientists often bathe in self-delusion. Such an ass could never manage to enter from behind and speak French at the same time.

To top it off, she didn't even ask me whether she should wear pink or blue pantyhose today, a big morning issue she never fails to bring up.

She went off to work and I stayed home to keep an eye on the neighborhood children and squirrels.

##

Dinner was over and they already had a fire roaring on this freezing February night. She could have started it herself, having been a teenage Amazon in the Italian girl scouts, but one thing she had learned on her own time is how to bolster the male ego. Woman, the eternal assuager of the male-boy ego. God is female, but was Jesus?, she wondered, staring into hot manifolds of flames lapping and caressing at the brittle wood. Woman has an extra cross to bear; besides enduring child-bearing and child-rearing.

Woman must know everything that man knows, plus how to support his genetically inferior ego.

Ringlets of blue smoke rose up from her small cigar, harmonizing with the smoke from the fire. It's not just sexual. Woman can crush man anytime she wants, just by making an adverse reference about the size of his dick, or by inferring that his prowess in bed is not as earth-shattering as that of her last lover. But more, even though She doesn't make love all the time, Woman must never rest from her eternal mission: to genuflect in front of, understand and not be sadistic about, balance on her knees and enfold it her breast, man's constant and vulnerable erection--his ego.

Her boss was puffing on a pipe, beaming with pride at his accomplishment with the fire. She reached out and pulled the cat to her lap. She had named it Puzzeta, Italian for Stinky, because when it was a kitten it had farted a lot. She liked to talk to it because she was convinced that, although it couldn't understand the meaning of her words, her tone must be comprehensible and reassuring to it.

They had talked about work, and about George, and music, and politics, and the politics of politics. She had put on Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. She was not proud of her lack of knowledge of classical music, but at least she knew that Vivaldi was a good bet on a cold evening with a dramatic fire.

It had been so long since George had held her and they had satisfied each other, it was good to be flattered by a handsome young buck. She had learned that the English expression "buck" was a degrading term for a black male, and she had expropriated the word for her own use in describing any macho male.

She was spending the evening with an overachiever, a man who had lost touch with his soul and who had determined that it was to be found in material accomplishments. A poor substitute for George, but someone traveled and experienced enough to entertain her and reinforce her belief in the poverty of man's world.

They chatted for two hours, watching the fire die down to embers, embracing, occasional light kisses, less passionate than those she would share with the cat but enough to keep him on edge. "We will share a warm, non-erotic evening together," she had said at the outset, in order to define the playing field. "Of course," he had answered in as neutral, enlightened a tone as possible; you bet, he thought, amidst visions as orgasmic as he could possibly muster up.

Then she said to him, "Let's take a bubble bath." He managed to grab the pipe with his hand before it fell out of his mouth.

##

I joined them for the evening's festivities. As usual she brought home a guy who didn't appreciate cats, so she had an excuse to talk especially nice to me as he interjected such remarks as "How can you let it around the table," and "Dogs are much more affectionate".

I wanted to be on hand in case she needed me. I know she can take care of herself, having been a social worker with juvenile delinquents in Italy, many of whom were thugs and drug addicts. Still, my mother instincts warned me to watch this one extra carefully, given the circumstances: her boss, especially charming and good look-

ing, and, most of all, Maria's confession to me that she was so horny she could even fuck the Italian Stallion movie star, if she weren't already married to a wonderful American giant and prospective Nobel Prize winner.

I employed my knowledge of guerrilla tactics. Every time they started to embrace I would demand to be let out, only to went back inside five minutes later. Once I stuck my smelly ass right in his face; I hadn't washed it all day just for the occasion.

##

He was delighted with himself as they entered the bathroom. She had incredible titties, and he didn't dare glance down at her pelvic region for fear he'd get hard before having a chance to slide under the protective layer of bubbles. Everything was going just as planned. She had a delightful whirlpool bath, one of the rewards of bourgeois success at the World Bank.

Everyone at the World Bank thinks of themselves as champions of a New and Just World Economic Order, the elite reaching out to the deprived masses. Why feel guilty about earning a damned good salary while fighting against insurmountable odds to try to make the world better? After all, he thought, Maria and I, and everyone else at the bank, are highly trained professionals who devote their lives to equality and decency. He discussed the irony with Maria as he poked at her expectantly through the bubbles, head at surface level, legs occasionally crossing and touching hers in as innocent and controlled a way as he could manage.

"Take Ethiopia", he explained, having used this example a hundred times during the last year. "Once they were occupied by the Italians. Now, allied with the strongest nation on Earth--the Americans would never agree that the Russians are now the most powerful nation in the history of the world, but fuck them--they are starving. What has been a slow, protracted death of many post-colonial countries is now accelerating to an unavoidable catastrophe. But we can't change it by giving up our own standards of living, for if we could I would in a second. Just tell me how and I would."

As he spoke he realized the ultimate truth, that the lost populations of the underdeveloped countries could slave all their lives, but not a one of those peasants would ever be able to afford to slide into a hot steamy bubble bath with a beautiful Italian woman with incredible tits.

He hoped his wife Sylvia was all right. He was often asked why he had finally married Sylvia after years of bachelorhood. All of his answers were reasonable explanations, although only peripherally true: her beauty, a professional woman, she respects her own mind, great cook, she finds time for her work and for love, etc. The naked truth: for the pussy.

He needed the pussy, and he couldn't go on the rest of his life pursuing it one weekend after another; at some point a man of his means and social expectations has to settle down with one great pussy. It was a basic necessity of life. Before Sylvia, he would conquer an average of 30 women a year, now, post-Sylvia, a discreet five or six when she was out of town or he was traveling.

Inveterate hunter, he would never give up the pursuit of fresh pussy entirely, merely temper it to manageable levels. He had come to realize, after years of philosophical inquiry, that the meaning of life is in the pussy. In America and Europe, thousands and thousands of Lesbians are proof in the pudding. As a good friend and connoisseur had once put it so brilliantly, "once they taste the pussy, they never go back to the dick." He was born to be a professional pussy-taster, but since society wasn't ready for that yet, he'd have to earn his money in some more acceptable fashion and pursue pussy as an avocation, a labor of love.

##

I followed them into the bathroom. This was further than Maria had ever gone before on a "date" after being married to George. She picked me up and whispered in my ear, "Don't worry, my love, nothing's going to happen, I'm just playing a little." When she pronounced the "i" in "little" like the long "e" in "sheet" instead of the short "i" in "shit", I was worried. She was losing her grasp over the language, and she had only drunk one glass of wine. If only I could come into the bubble bath with them, but no thanks.

##

She settled into the suds and lit up a little cigar. He's hunting me, she thought. It's fun to observe how the predator maps out his strategy, sizes up his prey, attempts to form a picture of what he's dealing with based on past experience, a life of hunting. But he's never dealt with a woman like me before. I'll give him the hunt but not the trophy. He can enjoy hunting, and I, also experienced carnivore, will play the hunted. He will fail because he sees only me, but I see both of us. I know what's in his head, and what's in mine, and he is only privy to his own thoughts, poor baby. But life wouldn't be right if the prey didn't get away every now and then. He'll appreciate it later in life. The trophy I save for George. In the meantime we can have good clean fun together.

##

The had chatted for half an hour, bathed in luxury. He waited and waited, thinking that since she had invited him into the tub, she would also invite him into her arms. Finally he was ready to pop an opening line, like, "Let's fuck," something raunchily bold as usual. He had been watching her luscious titties bobbing between the white suds the whole time, and so he was hard. Finally, "Squeeze my dick and see how much I want you," he challenged, heart singing out with desire, eager to bring this whole tantalizing evening to a climax.

As she did so he closed his eyes, but only to hear, "Yes, Sylvia must be proud," not a hint of desire or surrender on her part.

##

I heard the front door open as they were talking and I rushed out of the bathroom. Sure enough, it was George, looking tired and pissed off that he hadn't been picked up at the airport. Surveying the apartment with a glance, he heard

the chatter and smelled the vapors emanating from the bathroom. I shouted at him not to go in there, but George doesn't know "cunt", nor had he ever shown any interest in learning it.

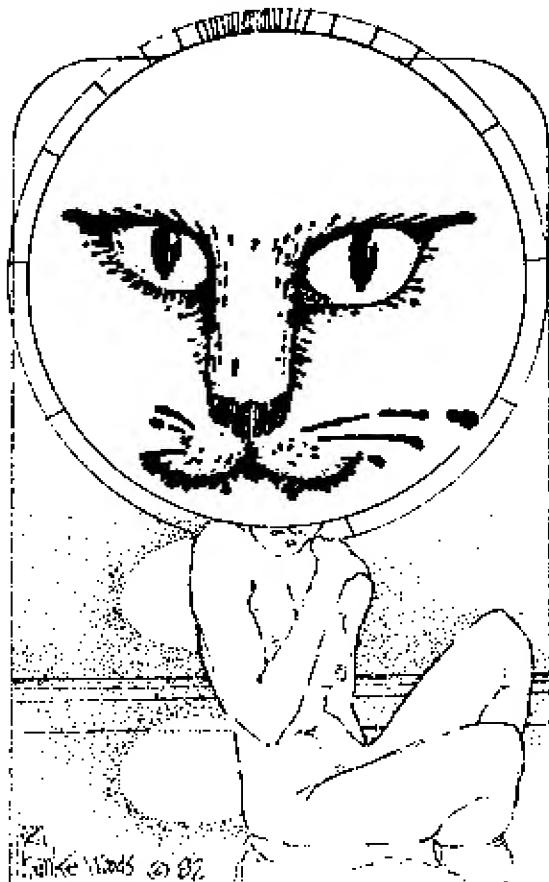
Imagine the sunken look on the Italian boss's face when George strode into the bathroom. Maria, splashing to her feet, said lightly, "George, you're an hour early," knowing full well that if she wasn't at the airport to meet him he would dive into a cab to get home to her.

George, a huge fellow, in his most gorilla-like voice, bellowed, "Look's like I'm an hour too late," as he grabbed the cringing Italian boss by the scruff of his neck, much like I would a kitten, and dragged him dripping naked through the apartment, pausing only to fling open the door and tossing him out into the sub-zero weather in his birthday suit (a cute human expression). The pile of clothes followed before the door was slammed shut.

Maria was in splendid form. Her face bore the expression of a damsel who had been saved from a fire-breathing Italian macho by an American white knight. It appeared to me that she had calculated the whole thing, though to this day I'm not sure exactly why.

She took George straight into the bedroom and spent several hours soothing him and cooing into his ear before he finally decided that maybe there was some truth in her argument that it had all been an innocent evening and that in today's times a little bubble bath is nothing to get upset about.

That night George didn't even bother to greet me, even though he hadn't seen me in almost two months.♦



# Role Reversals in 3 New Novels:

*Ibis* by Linda Steele

*Double Nocturne* by Cynthia Felice

*A Door Into Ocean* by Joan Slonczewski

reviewed by Janice Bogstad

Remember those old stories about giant women or women living in hive-like societies under the domination of a queen-bee? There were always warrior-women who were at her beck and call and when the virile males appeared, most of the women welcomed them with open arms? Well, these books are not like that, although some of the elements remain in each. In these novels women are trying to explain to men what it means to be powerless in a society where power is based partially on one's gender; where one's objections are not even heard, much less taken seriously, because of a physiological difference between those in power and the powerless. And these role-reversal novels, with women in positions of authority, do not end with the virile and clearly-superior (both physically and morally) males taking over from their appreciative female conquests. Rather, they use male characters in positions of powerlessness to explore the devastating implications of that position.

Of these three novels, the one which comes closest to the old hive-women cliche is *Ibis* (DAW, 1985) by Linda Steele. It carries a front-cover subtitle, "Witch Queen of the Hive Women", added, no doubt, to attract the unwary. It begins, as does Felice's *Double Nocturne* (Bluejay, 1986), with a crash-landing, and shares the plot of a bewildered male protagonist who must negotiate the hostile culture in order to save his colleagues. In *Ibis*, Padrec Morrissey's responsibilities towards a large group of humans also hinges on his relationship with a powerful woman, a queen of one of that world's many hives, similar to *Double Nocturne*'s Tom Hark. But where Felice takes her protagonist through several matriarchal cultures, Steele focusses on one.

From the jacket-information on *Ibis*, one gets only the misconception that Steele is replaying the same old mother-fear, matriarchal-oppressiveness that characterized earlier role-reversal novels by male authors. It is in the character study that the novel rises above this cliche. Padrec is truly attracted to the queen who owns him. Although he uses his position to free his comrades, the depths of his powerlessness and his inability to leave Queen Anii, coupled with his moral need to defy her, causes in him a sacrifice that is uncharacteristic of male SF protagonist but very characteristic of real women as well as female protagonists in SF and non-SF novels. I applaud the author's risk of misinterpretation in order to probe the nature of powerlessness.

*Double Nocturne* follows a bemused male protagonist on a seemingly simple rescue mission through two permutations of female-ruled cultures. However, each of these is presented in a somewhat more positive light than the hive-culture on *Ibis*. All of the cultures on Islandia seem viable and generally comfortable. They are ruled by queens and the second is faithful to a matriarchal, pacifist religion. The story itself is a rich one: Hark abandons an interstellar craft in a surface lander in order to recover his female captain and another female crewmember who went to the planet of Islandia first and in the course of this rescue mission is himself downed by bad weather. His rescue by a group belonging to the same government as those who earlier picked up his colleagues affords him many examples of the position of the powerless in the sort of society which makes a gender/power equation. He journeys to the city of Fox with his two male rescuers, Jeremy and Orrin, only to discover there that these men have each his own reasons for being dissatisfied with a culture in which even their dietary needs are constantly under the supervision of women. He thus also becomes the nexus around which their rebellion is acted out through their assisting him in his flight to another queendom, New Penance.

Alas, a relationship formed on the road between Hark and Sellia, one of that country's twin-queens, does not afford him any more success in being heard and believed. It is only the intervention from a member of a third planetary culture, not necessarily better but again different from the other two, which allows him to recover his captain and crewmate, his craft and an escaping citizen of Fyxen, the first country. The adventure is enhanced constantly by the many misunderstandings, misreadings, and general miscommunication which inevitably results when someone raised with one set of cultural mores meets individuals who ascribe to another set. But even more striking are the descriptions of Hark's frustrations when his very words are not heard. His explanations, truthful or otherwise, make little difference to his captors in either Fox or New Penance because they are seen through a veil of disbelief in male intelligence and veracity which is an effective distancing of the situations women of the real world deal with on a daily basis. I will be curious to see if male readers find it as effective as I did.

One cannot properly call *A Door Into Ocean* (Bluejay, 1986) a role-reversal novel, because the race of beings who inhabit living rafts on the ocean world of Shora are androgynous throughout their lives. Yet their culture is described in terms which make negotiating with it seem equally frustrating. The Shorans are willing to listen to two human males, young Spinel and the older General Realgar--their erst-while protectors--for Shora is initially perceived as a primitive, colonial-ripe planet by Realgar's superiors. The Shorans are, however, philosophically predisposed against the tactics of fear and aggression which hold the latter's intergalactic society together. The Shorans demonstrate the strength of their convictions in the face of destructive forays by a technologically superior society. Slonczewski introduces the themes of pacifist strength and an ecological awareness, which lead to superior medical skill through the exploration of a philosophical system which would take much time to detail, and is best understood

through multiple readings of the novel.

Curiously, the ideological clashes brought about by two different sets of assumptions about the structure of reality are most clear in conversations between two pairs of lovers, Spinel and Lystra, a young Shoran; and Realgar and his fiancee, Bernice. Bernice has embraced the Shoran life because it answers her need to be treated as an equal.

It has been said that a love relationship between two individuals is the true test of a utopia. I think, rather, as in these three books, it is the best way to represent the close connection between personal life and the public, political structures of any society. This watch word, "The personal is the political", is understood implicitly by many women whose personal powerlessness is controlled by governmental decree. Each of these authors has chosen to explore that powerlessness by the device of placing men in the weaker position.●

## Barbary

by Vonda N. McIntyre

reviewed by Janice Bogstad

McIntyre's newest novel, *Barbary* (Houghton Mifflin, 1986), is one of those straightforward science-fiction adventures so enjoyed by teenaged or adult readers. There's near-future technology, encounters with aliens, and chances for the youthful protagonists to make their mark on the future.

Twelve-year-old Barbary is an orphan who has moved from one foster-home to another on Earth, until an old friend of her mother's living with his child on a space station offers to adopt her. Barbary has all the fears one might expect in an adolescent going to live in space. For her it's a release and a new beginning. On the way she's befriended by a black astronaut, a woman who is the new space station head.

Barbary has two adventurous friends, a Manx cat named Mick, and her new sister, Heather. Heather's father, the colony's poet, is working on a relationship with Thea, a rebellious technician. And the space station is about to make contact with the first alien race to enter our solar system.

By now, it must be evident that the plot has many features which separate it from many other YA novels. An official poet on a space station, whose manager is a black woman; two girls with the inventiveness, knowledge, and interest to undertake several kinds of adventure, whose responsible parent is a man; these possibilities might arise in the kind of future I would like to see, but seldom have seen in science fiction stories for younger readers. That these features are all background makes them all the more effective. The implication is that they are normal, rather than remarkable, providing subtle contrasts to the restrictive stereotypes young people are offered daily. The strength of McIntyre's novel, as with her others, lies in this subtlety.●

## Downtime

by Cynthia Felice

reviewed by Janice Bogstad

Cynthia Felice's *Downtime* (Bluejay, 1985) went by so fast, I had to page back through it to discover its particular enchantment. Obsessive attention is required to follow the cast and plot, and respond to the novel's rapid pace. Each bit of an increasingly complex interaction between an intergalactic civilization, an isolated world; and the sentient beings who live there are added as a surprise. We don't meet the main characters at first, and their significance is not apparent until halfway through the novel. The relationship between the planet-bound Jason and his superior, Calla, is outlined on the dust jacket, but mentioned only briefly in the first third of a book in which intergalactic, interplanetary, interracial (human and non-human) and interpersonal plots are woven together, a thread at a time.

The author has a lot to accomplish in 250 pages, and if the political motivations are not always clear, the personal ones are. Within the scope of attempts to save an intergalactic alliance, a love is rekindled--but not at the expense of duty. Calla's final sacrifices, of which Jason claims to be incapable, are for the good of the alliance and a larger group of people under her care, rather than for Jason alone. Jason's dedication to aliens whose sentience is in doubt motivates many of his actions, despite his love for Calla. This work exemplifies a relationship between the interpersonal and the public/political that has interested feminists for decades. It does so on a very large scale, which at once dilutes and focusses on the many points at which one's personal life has political implications. I predict you will be fascinated by the macro- and micro-scales of *Downtime*.●

## 4 Reviews by Philip Kaveny

### *Age of Wonders*

by David Hartwell

David Hartwell gives an insider's view of a body of literature as hard to nail down as a blob of quicksilver: science fiction. Hartwell's background includes a lifelong interest in SF and a PhD from Columbia University in medieval comparative literature. He has worked as an SF editor for Dell, Berkeley Books, and the much acclaimed *Timescape* series.

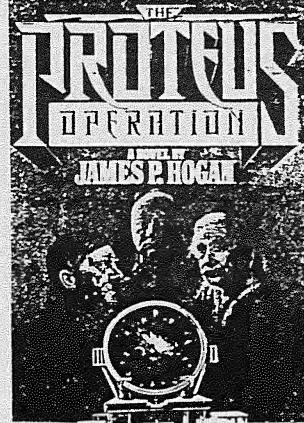
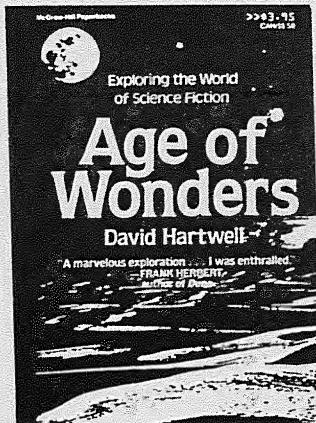
In *Age of Wonders* (McGraw Hill, 1985) he compares SF to Los Angeles: everyone knows where it is, but no one is sure how to describe it. This is an excellent book for those who are fascinated by SF but cannot read it.

Hartwell talks about the importance of the big idea in science fiction. He says that its essential that the writer work with a concept that appeals to the reader's sense of wonder. An interesting idea within this area is the Schrödinger's Cat paradigm: You know there is a cat in a box with a lethal poison, but you cannot see into the box to know if that cat has eaten it and died. As a result you have one universe in which the cat is dead, and another in which it is not. Multiply this concept by the number of atoms in the universe and you see a beautiful alternative reality which may through some permeability interact with what we agree to be our own. Two current examples of this type of book are the ones reviewed next.♦

### *The Proteus Operation*

by James P. Hogan

*The Proteus Operation* (Bantam, 1985) works with the same big idea of multiple universes in which different contingencies take place. Hogan has a reputation as a hard science writer with a very wide following. To be fair, the book was good enough to be disappointing. It is very frustrating because it suffers in the sense that Hogan has the chance to say a lot, but he says nothing about everything. Perhaps the worst part about Hogan is that he uses the same plot device as Pohl as a kind of cookie cutter. So we have a writer who has access to all the major historical characters of the World War 2 and does nothing with them.♦



### *The Coming of the Quantum Cats*

by Frederick Pohl

*The Coming of the Quantum Cats* (Bantam, 1986) is a delightfully well-crafted book. We are gradually drawn into present-day Chicago through a character with a rather low-rent viewpoint, who at one point says that he "could do more if he were a little better connected with Arab money". Well, we are still in Chicago until the guy decides to go swimming topless and gets a ticket. I read it again and, right, he gets a ticket. And gets hauled off to be interrogated by a woman who has only a few fingers left because she got busted for drugs. Now we are not sure that we are in Chicago any more. It seems that a deal has been made in this reality between right-wing Christians and Moslem fundamentalists to run a kind of Art Deco USA. There are cracks in this reality that allow it to interact with other parallel universes. It is Pohl's craft that takes this rather droll concept and breathes life into it so we, as readers, are delighted with its possibilities and start to fill in the gaps ourselves. I won't spoil the story, but it lives up to its potential.♦

### *The Scientific Romance*

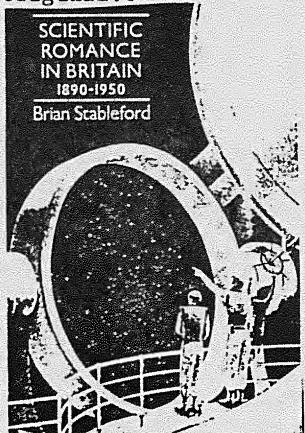
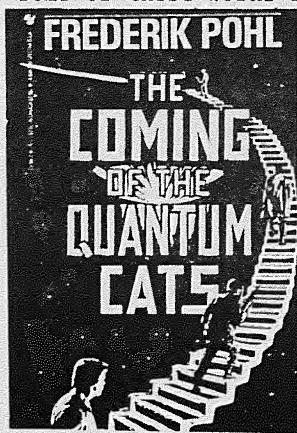
*in Britain, 1890-1950*

by Brian Stableford

Stableford's work (St. Martins, 1985) complements *Age of Wonders*, filling an important gap in the development of science fiction.

Stableford defines the scientific romance in Britain according to the characteristics of its market. Its existence was made possible by the demise of the Victorian triple decker of the 1880s and the emergence of middle-brow market magazines such as *The Strand* and *The Field*. Their readers were hungry for and willing to pay for the likes of H. G. Wells and Sir A. Conan Doyle. (These same writers start to appear shortly thereafter as hard cover novelists, much like the American pulp market 60 years later.)

His book is a gateway to a forgotten and beautiful garden. One becomes familiar with names like William Hope Hodgson, Arthur Machen, Olaf Stapleton. There's a beautiful section on Wells. He treats around 40 writers from this 60-year period, quoting tantalizing sections from their works. His excellent biographical and bibliographical work will allow me to read at least some of these works in the original.♦



# Aliens: Perversion of Motherhood, Parody of Birth

reviewed by Janice Bogstad

The appearance of the aliens you see in *Aliens* the sequel to the 1979 horror-science fiction movie, *Alien* will not surprise you, nor will their tenacity. The film is a tense blockbuster, one harrowing battle after another, beginning with the psychological and bureaucratic ones which face Ripley on her return to human civilization and ending with those she survives at the mercy of the aliens. Of course, these battles place her in the position to further develop her heroic stature, because of her single-handed success against vast numbers of aliens is opposed to the failures of male and female counterparts, including a squad of marines. Her seeming equal in survival ability is a nine-year-old-girl named Newt.

There are improvements over the original in this sequel. The voyueristic scenes from the 1979 *Alien* that presented Ripley as an almost totally nude female are replaced by scenes in which, she still appears in underwear, but it is less revealing and more servicable. While Ripley is not initially in charge of the rescue expedition this time, acting rather as an observer and advisor, her competence against the aliens who are a known quantity to her slowly forces her into the foreground until she alone is able to counter their attempted destruction of all human life.

It seems that Hollywood has finally given us a female hero of considerable stature. The subtext of the film is equally interesting in its opposition of the organic to the mechanical. We are used to thinking of human beings as primarily organic, but it was clear from the original *Alien* that the creatures are the ultimate adaptive organic lifeform. They perhaps have a spaceship, as seen in that first film, but it is filled with forms which imitate intestines and orifaces.

These same aliens transform the sharp corners and mechanical devices of a human colony in *Aliens* into similar steamy and dripping reminders of our inner workings, but this time with human beings imbedded in them as hosts for future aliens. On several registers, the human use of mechanical devices is opposed to the alien's perfected organisms. Human guns, space ships, colonies, and even a mechanical device which surrounds the human body, must be used against their threat. The one being who is able to effectively help Ripley is in fact another mechanical device, an artificial person.

Yet the vague sense of dissatisfaction with Ripley as a hero is foregrounded by this opposition. At decisive points in the film, when she must decide to endanger herself further than is demanded of her, it is made clear that this sacrifice is prompted by her concern for children. Her accompaniment on the mission to the human colony is assured when the fact emerges that colonists include families. And her direct confrontations with the aliens are prompted by the need to protect and rescue the young Newt. In the final confrontation with the alien, the female who is responsible for laying eggs which impregnate human beings prepared for that purpose, her remark "Leave her alone, you bitch", clarifies the position of each--they are mothers fighting for their young, just as all mothers do, right? While the alien form of reproduction has been noted for its parody of the birth process--and in *Aliens*, a human female becomes the example of this gruesome performance--the second film focuses on motherhood as a subtext. Any heroic proportions that Ripley attains are mitigated by this portrait of her as a mother, while at the same time the alien is rendered less incomprehensible--she is also fighting for the survival of her young.



I admired Ripley as a character in this film, but I continually asked myself the question, Why could she not be portrayed as a hero who saves the human race rather than a heroine who fights to save her young? Well, because women are not capable of such abstract heroism, right?

We are by now used to larger-than-life, fierce male heroes whose personal quests result in the salvation of the myriad little people. Ripley's obvious human concern for those weaker than her is not up to their stature. What do I as a viewer expect of a hero, and who has created these expectations only to frustrate them in the person of Ripley?

Ripley is not, thank the goddess, a Rambo, but can her audience appreciate her for what she really is, a truly unselfish hero who risks her own body and peace of mind to save others from their own folly? If I found myself dissatisfied in taking her measure against that of the contemporary Hollywood hero, how does she appear to those wishing unwilling in the first place to countenance a female hero? Can there be a female hero in contemporary film? In thinking about this film, it has become apparent to me what dilemmas face the filmmaker who tries to construct one.●

## Dorothea Dreams

by Suzy McKee Charnas

reviewed by Janice Bogstad

One never knows what to expect next from Suzy McKee Charnas. Her new books never fit comfortably into a sequence with the previous ones, even though ones of them (*Motherlines*) was, properly speaking, a sequel. After *Walk to the End of the World* and *Motherlines*, *Vampire Tapestry* was a complete surprise. Then there was the novella (or novelet) "Burnt Dinner in New Niger". And now there is *Dorothea Dreams* (Bluejay, 1985).

This latest novel is not science fiction. It could be called fantasy if the themes of reincarnation and moralistic ghosts and artists' inspirations could be said to make it such. More than anything, it is the exploration of an artist's vision and its interconnectedness to the world around her, despite her best efforts to ignore that connection. Dorothea's artistic vision, created in years of seeming isolation, completes itself in the course of contact with her several corporeal and disorporate visitors. The idea that her work has a life of its own, and hers goes on from the point at which they part company, is not new in the ongoing dialog of artist and world in which we all participate. It is the frame that Charnas uses to create this particular rendering of that idea that contributes a new piece to that not-yet-completed mosaic. Your own viewing is suggested.●

## *The Handmaid's Tale*

by Margaret Atwood

reviewed by Janice Bogstad

*The Handmaid's Tale* (Houghton Mifflin, 1986) has continued to provoke comment since its initial appearance in the early part of 1986. It was reviewed by Mary McCarthy, well-known writer, in the February 9, 1986 *New York Times Book Review*, and a reply to the review was printed in the Letters section of the March 9 issue. Reviewers praised it as excellent science fiction--and as better than science fiction--because it treats a future that might come about, and also shows us how we might arrive at that future. It was praised for its innovativeness, its believability, its craft, and imagination.

The story details a reactionary society of the near future where women and the sexual promiscuity they as a matter of course engender are identified as the source of social unrest by the fundamentalist Christian communities of the United States. A violent upheaval takes place in which women are deprived of their rights and divided into castes of Wives, Handmaids (reproducers) and Marthas (domestics). Each is assigned a strictly designated place in society without power over their own lives, much less over the workings of the society of which they are a part. The story is told from the perspective of one woman who has been separated from her husband and daughter and transformed into a Handmaid at the mercy of married couples who are unable to produce children of their own because of genetic damage caused by radiation.

This book is science fiction by all definitions I have contemplated of the genre. It is an interesting extrapolation, taking reactionary trends from contemporary culture and following their trajectory into a frightening future which is patterned, as in much science fiction, after past or foreign societies. Here we see elements of Middle-Eastern purdah and of women in the medieval economy. Atwood's writing is, as always, solid and entertaining. However, it is not innovative when viewed within the context of science fiction literature. It is not even unusual for this period of SF writing by women. A few examples should suffice to prove my point, which, I think, needs to be made in order for the real significance of this title to be appreciated. *The Handmaid's Tale* is significant because it calls the attention of the non-science fiction reading public to some serious problems in our culture that have been taken up in contemporary science fiction of the last 10 years. It is just too bad that Atwood, and a large number of her readers, have chosen to be ignorant of these other significant works.

Take, for example, the postulation that a reactionary group will seize control of the government and put women back in their place. In recent years alone we have had various speculations on this possibility, some with frightening and others with hopeful outcomes. These include Suzy McKee Charnas' *Walk to the End of the World* (1974) and *Motherlines* (1978),

Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1985), (New York, DAW, 1984) Zoe Fairbairns' *Benefits* (1979), J. Neil Schulman's *Rainbow Cadenza* (1983) all immediately come to mind.

In each of these sober projections, women become the scapegoats for all that is wrong with contemporary Western culture and the bearers of its worst burdens, just as they do in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Most of these works also detail the process by which women were put in the position of subservience, if not slavery. The transition is well established in its frightening believability as each is a kind of cautionary tale. *Benefits* is a good example of this because a government program to create genetic perfection through controlled breeding programs. Non-participating women are then placed in a powerful position, because they are the only ones left with a healthy genetic makeup, and take over when the breeding program produces only monsters. This is a positive view of the possibilities created by attempts at a monolithic solution to complex problem.

Other views of the results of the reactionary scapegoating of women are not nearly so positive. They share the tone of *The Handmaid's Tale*, which ends ambiguously, with the protagonist either escaping or being carried off to torture and death by government agents (the latter being the fate of most of those rebellious women around her). *Rainbow Cadenza*, *Native Tongue*, *Motherlines* show the beginnings of freedom-movements amongst oppressed women, but they offer little hope for the immediate relief of their suffering.

Although *The Handmaid's Tale* is technically solid and interesting, it is not innovative. In fact, it is very much in the tradition of science fiction and within the mainstream of cautionary tales about women's vulnerability within a society which needs scapegoats if it is to avoid fundamental changes in the way that individuals are valued. Along with many other writers, Atwood has noticed that the contemporary world is unstable. The power structure must change in some direction and, while we all hope that it will be away from simplistic, unilateral, and

## MARGARET ATWOOD THE HANDMAID'S TALE



hierarchical forms, the greater likelihood lies with further polarization which may make women as an identifiable group, with a fabricated history of evil, uncleanness, inferiority, and weakness; the soft underbelly of a even more monolithic state machinery than we already experience. I applaud Atwood's book for skillfully bringing these cautions to a larger audience. But I despair of the literary community, including Atwood herself, for ignoring the voices of SF writers who have been telling this same tale for over a decade. One would think that reviewers who appreciate Atwood would want to call attention to these others, as I, do in order to give all involved a fair hearing.●

streets of Seattle. The casual passersby see him as a younger variation on a bag lady, but not a wino. His difficulty in melting into the mass of his contemporaries is one of delusions, or of particular vision.

The story is told from the unreliable narrative perspective of the Wizard. He sees his life in terms of two worlds: that of the derelict/crazy man and that of the powerful wizard who must look like a derelict in order to retain his powers. Wizard is not alone in his efforts; his powerful mentor, Cassie, and several other "marginal" people reinforce his delusion/vision. It is the peculiar charm of this story that the reader very likely puts down *Wizard* without being able to decide if he is a derelict or a wizard--and with a different perspective on the marginal individuals encountered in daily life thereafter.

Lindholm has a quality in her writing that reminds me of John Crowley's earlier works, such as *Engine Summer*--an ability to draw readers in while engaging their minds in constant speculation on the position of the narrator. I can safely recommend all of Lindholm's work.●

## Wizard of Pigeons

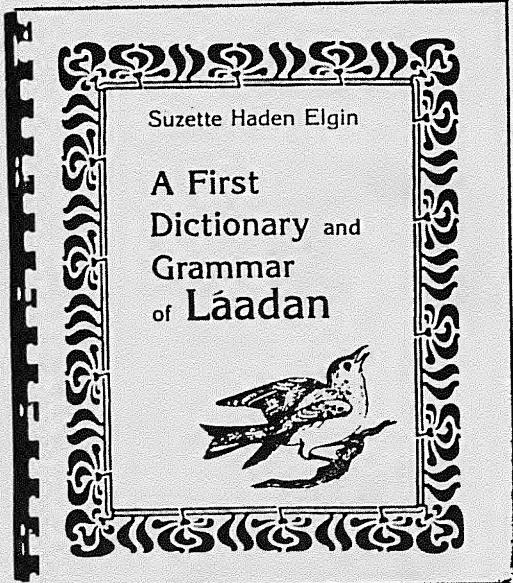
by Megan Lindholm

reviewed by Janice Bogstad

I thought that after I had read Megan Lindholm's striking trilogy, *Harpy's Flight* (1983), *The Windsingers* (1984), and *The Limbreath Gate* (1984), I had a good idea of this new author's talents. The protagonist of the trilogy, Kian Vandien, is a female shapeshifter who, in her world, has paranormal powers over her body and environment. Yet Kian and her sisters suffer the same psychological oppression common to women in our world.

*Wizard of Pigeons* (Ace, 1986) is a very different book. It might be called a mature work, except that it's only her fourth novel. Clearly, we can expect much more from her in the future.

The protagonist of *Wizard...* is human, a Vietnam war veteran living as a derelict in the inner



**A First Dictionary and Grammar of Láadan**  
by Suzette Haden Elgin

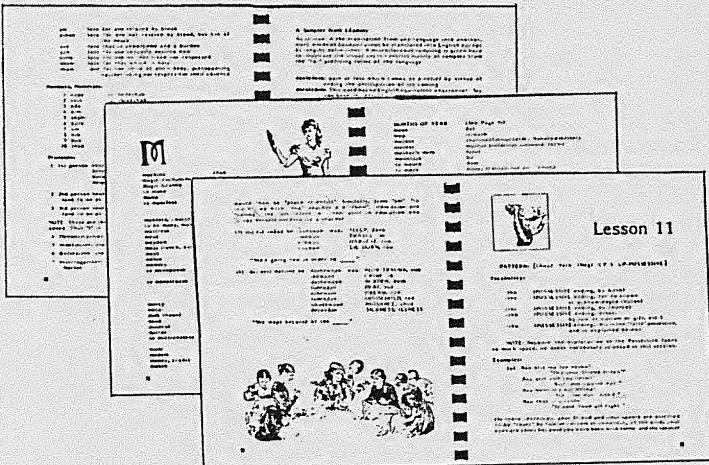
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Láadan is a real language created by Elgin as background for her science-fiction novel, *Native Tongue* (DAW Books, 1984). In Elgin's words, "Láadan is a language invented by a woman, for women, to express the perceptions of women".

Currently director of the Ozark Center for Language Studies in Huntsville, Arkansas, Elgin is widely published in both linguistics and science fiction. Her books include *The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense* (and two sequels), a number of linguistics texts, and several science-fiction novels. *Native Tongue 2: The Judas Rose* will be published by DAW Books in early 1987.

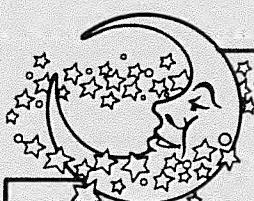


**INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY OF WOMEN'S MEDIA**

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The Directory includes a section of over 800 media women & media-concerned women. It is also an annotated, cumulative Index of media activities and research from the bi-monthly *Media Report to Women*.

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no. 22

This is issue #22 and it is being produced by Spike. This issue is also brought to you by Steven Liedke (long-editing), A. Karmel, Phil Davenport (layout), Hope Alister (the logo), and contributing writers Janice Rostig, Vicki L. Parker, Vicki Dacharme, Andrew Hooper, Pete Wentz. Special thanks to Bill Farina (for colored-link reproduction) and Jim Cole, gracious label-maker.

Subscriptions to CUBE are available for the price of an SF3 membership, priced from a reasonable \$3 (non-voting associate category) to the totally nuttocratic lifetime fee of \$250. Between them are the Student/Economy (\$4), Full (\$10), Supporting (\$15), Sustaining (\$20), and Patron (\$25) membership levels. Send in your dues and assure yourself of continuing news about SF3 activities. Send your bucks along with your name and address to SF3, Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624. Don't be shy! Offer to design a logo or write something for the next CUBE. It will be out in early February and will cover February/March. News or announcements appropriate to that time frame should be given to Spike by January 21, or sent to the above address.

#### SF3 ANNUAL MEETING

About forty members attended our semi-annual meeting in the SF3 Annual Meeting held at Union South at 1:30 p.m. on October 12, 1986. In the absence of official 1985 minutes, the minutes of the previous year were read and forgotten, the summary written by Theron and published in CUBE #10 was read and approved. Diane Martin, Treasurer, read the financial reports for 1985-86, and a proposed 1986-87 budget, with input from SF3 members and volunteers. At this meeting SF3 members voted to have the budget be decided by the Executive Board based on a delineated set of recommendations from the Publications Committee. The possibility of having an annual audience collection and donating bookmoney to the Madison Public Library was discussed; \$100 was added to the budget for this. Again the Publications Committee will make a final recommendation for the final plan, to be reported in the Executive Board in January.

#### HIGHLIGHTS: DIRECTORS COMMITTEE REPORTS

This year Phil Kaveney (Program Committee) won a \$250 grant from the Madison Foundation to hold the 1987 Fantasy/Animation Convention at Union South. SF3 and the Tolkien Society co-sponsored the event. The issue of Aurora (presently in production) will be out in October. SF3 will be last to be out. Spike reported that seven issues of CUBE were published last fiscal year, and that the 1987 budget included a new entertainment issue sent to area folks on the mailing list.

#### ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following were elected to SF3: Peter Liedke, President; Vicki L. Parker, Vice-President; Diane Martin, Treasurer; Vicki Dacharme, Recording Secretary; Jeanne Comell, Corresponding Secretary; President Theron appointed Vickie Root, Wilson Committee Chairperson, and Jan Roget, Publications Committee Chairperson.

-Spike

#### A DELANY INTERSECTION

It seems to me that Delany has been part of science fiction forever. Perhaps this is because his first published work of fiction, *Neuromancer* (1984), was 20 and I was 12 and just tall enough to get into the adult part of the public library where the science fiction section was (and is) located. I can't remember that book at all, but I do remember I remember other books of his, especially *Nebula* (1966) and *Nova* (1968), all of which are still in print. From the mid-70s on, I read his *Dark Matter* (1975), *White Dwarf* (1976), or his more recent fantasy works, such as *Tales of Neuromancer* (1979), *Neuromancer* (1984), and *Flight of the Orion* (1985). I also read his first novel, *Star in My Eye* (1974) and his last, *Pyramid* (1986).

But it is not just the breadth of his fictional writing that calls one's attention to this author. True, he has won several awards and those awards, but he also recently received the 1986 Nebula Award for Best Novella from the Science Fiction Research Association for his life-long contributions to SF criticism as represented by his critical essays and reviews. He is also a poet, and his poetry gives him a unique perspective on the methods and the substance of his stories, as reflected in his fiction and his criticism. I have read his poetry and his criticism and his criticism has prompted his stories, such as *Pyramid* (1986).

This makes recommending a single title as an introduction to Delany's work difficult. I might suggest the stories in *Neuromancer* and the long story, "Flight of the Orion", for the fan. The short story compilation *Pyramid* is also excellent.

Depth, still, the one I keep returning to is *Neuromancer*. The first time I read it, I was 12 and I could only remember the names. Others might remember *Nova*, where the characters are all names. I can't remember *Neuromancer* as well, but I seemingly often re-read it. Then there is the story *Time Considered as a Hull or Soul-Principle*. Stories that I can't understand. I can't understand *Pyramid*. Still, I have two of his many re-readings of these, and I will view one plane of Delany's multi-faceted talent.

-- Janice Rostig

You may remember that issue #12/13 of *Cube* carried several articles about Delany. Copies are still available from SF3 for \$5.

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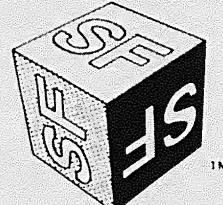
## Join SF<sup>3</sup>

SF<sup>3</sup> (or, more formally, the Society for the Furtherance and Study of Fantasy and Science Fiction) is a not-for-profit Wisconsin corporation with IRS tax-exempt status. SF<sup>3</sup> is the umbrella corporation that sponsors activities like WisCon, Aurora, New Moon, and other SF and fantasy related events that are guaranteed to lose money. Your dues go toward providing a post office box, bulk mailing permit, posters, scholarships, and other financial support for these activities.

Please consider joining SF<sup>3</sup>. It's a Good Cause. It's Tax Deductible. And it includes a free subscription to *Cube*, our bi-monthly newsletter (edited by Spike).

#### Annual Dues

\$3	Associate (non-voting)
\$6	Student/Economy
\$9	Basic
\$15	Contributing
\$24	Supporting
\$36	Sustaining
\$48	Patron
\$250	Lifetime (payable in installments)



# Contributors' Gallery

**Susan Balliette** (4302 Major Ave., Madison, WI 53716) is an aspiring musician, occasionally playing drums with local jazz bands.

**Janice Bogstad** (Box 2056, Madison, WI 53701-2056). A funny thing happened on her way toward her doctorate in comparative literature: Jan stopped to get a masters in library science.

**Brad W. Foster** (4109 Pleasant Run, Irving, TX 75062) is a freelance illustrator and cartoonist, with his own studio, Jabberwocky Graphix.

**Steven Fox** (5646 Pemberton St., Philadelphia, PA 19143-2420) is a student and freelance artist.

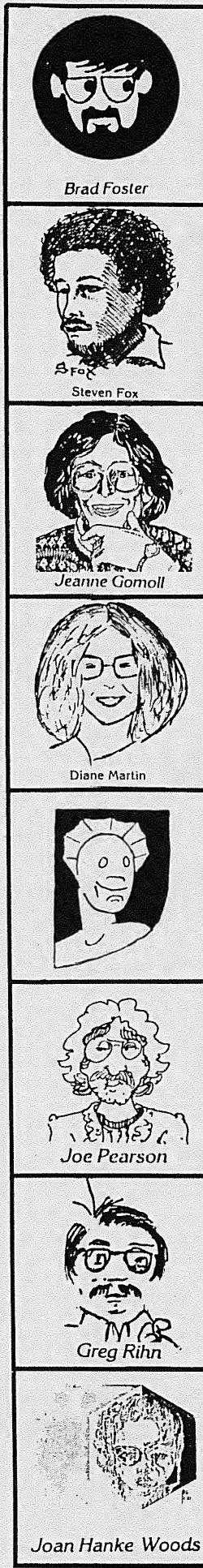
**Judy Goldsmith** (945 Spaight St., Madison, WI 53703) is a frequent reviewer for the Midwest Book Review.

**Jeanne Gomoll** (Box 1443, Madison, WI 53701-1443) is a graphics artist for the Wis. Dept. of Natural Resources.

**Paul Grussendorf** (3100 Connecticut Ave., #228, Washington, DC 20008) is an attorney working with refugees to help them acquire political asylum in the US.

**David Johnson** (442 Michael Manor, Glenview, IL 60025) is an artist.

**Philip Kaveny** (815 E. Johnson St. #4, Madison, WI 53703) is a poet, writer, book seller, and group dynamics expert.



**Robert Kellough** (1108 E. Gorham St., #4, Madison, WI 53703) is an artist, and has illustrated a number of small press publications.

**Hank Luttrell** (108 King St., Madison, WI 53703) is a long-time SF fan and writer, and owns 20th Century Books, which specializes in SF, mysteries, and comics.

**Diane Martin** (2621 Kendall Ave., Madison, WI 53705) has been involved in amateur publishing since 1962. She also works as office manager to a business machine company.

**Stella Mockingbird** (Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624) is a reclusive artist.

**Allan Morris** (201 E. 21st St., #4N, New York, NY 10010) is a writer, published in many and various places, from Women's World to Washington Review.

**Joe Pearson** (5410 Red Oak Dr., Hollywood, CA 90068-2548) is a freelance artist.

**Carol Poster** (1906 Sir James Ave. Salt Lake City, UT 84116) is a poet.

**Greg Rihn** (2423A S. 63rd st., Milwaukee, WI 53219) is an assistant city attorney, dungeonmaster, and humorist.

**Pat Stewart** (3827 W. Auer St., Milwaukee, WI 53216) is a poet.

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